

FIVE CENTS

BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No. 67

BEYOND THE
FROZEN SEAS
or The Land of the Pigmies



BY
CORNELIUS SHEA

Involuntarily Steve put out his hand and seized her, then down came the rope, whirling through the frosty air like a monster snake in its death struggles.

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Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1904, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C. STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 67.

NEW YORK, April 2, 1904.

Price Five Cents.

BEYOND THE FROZEN SEAS;

OR,

The Land of the Pigmies.

By CORNELIUS SHEA.

CHAPTER I.

STRIKING A SITUATION.

"Say, what are you looking so down in the mouth for?"

"You would look that way, too, if you were in my place."

"Why, what is the matter?—lost a near relative, or something like that?"

"No, not lately. I can't find any work to do; that is what makes me look down in the mouth."

A look of surprise came over the face of the first speaker, and then he broke into a light laugh.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "suppose everybody who couldn't find a job just when they wanted it should get discouraged over it, and sit half a day on a park bench, with a funeral look on their faces? What then?"

"Your words put new life into me." And the boy who had been seated on the bench in the park so long, sprang to his feet with a gleam of determination in his eye.

"Put her there, then!"

The other speaker, who was also a boy, thrust out his hand, and then the pair indulged in a hearty shake.

"My name is Steve Whitely," said he. "I have lived in New York City ever since I can remember, and I have seen about as hard times as most folks."

"I am from Dutchess County; my name is Jim Wakely. I have worked on a farm ever since I can remember, and have experienced more hard times than good ones."

"And you came to New York to look for a job?"

"Yes. I got here day before yesterday."

"It's a poor place to find work just now," and Steve Whitely shook his head. "I have been out of a job over two weeks now, but I am not discouraged yet by any means."

"Well, I am from the rural districts, and do not know as much about life as you do."

"I have taken a liking for you, Jim Wakely! What do you say if we strike out together to look for a job?" exclaimed the city boy, as he gazed earnestly at his companion's face.

"I shall be very glad to do so, if I am not thrusting myself on you," was the reply.

"Thrusting yourself upon me? I guess not! I can size a fellow up pretty well when I see him, I can tell

you. Here comes a boy with papers; we'll buy one and see if there are any jobs to look up."

Steve Whitely purchased the paper, and, seating themselves on a bench, the two began scanning it.

Both were well-built, fine-looking young fellows, and neither was over eighteen.

Jim Wakely's attire and manner showed plainly that he was from the country, but there was nothing that suggested a greenhorn in his countenance.

The suit worn by his companion was of fashionable cut, though well worn, and there was quite a contrast between the two as they sat there.

Suddenly Steve's eye caught sight of the following advertisement:

"Wanted—A limited number of able-bodied young men to call at Room 71, Gloucester Building, 3 P. M. to-day."

That was all there was of it, and the New York boy allowed that it was a rather odd advertisement.

"What do you say if we answer it?" he exclaimed.

"I am perfectly willing," replied Jim.

"It isn't three o'clock yet; but suppose we walk up to the Gloucester Building, so as to be on time?"

"Whatever you say, I am willing to do."

After leaving the park the two boys soon struck Broadway, and the farther they walked the more curious they became to know what the advertisement meant.

They halted in front of the Gloucester Building, and, looking at his watch, Steve found it was twenty minutes of three.

After walking up and down for fifteen minutes they went inside.

An elevator was something entirely new to Jim, but he did not show the astonishment he felt when they went shooting upward.

Steve had no difficulty in finding Room 71, and pausing in front of it, he tapped gently on the door.

It was opened immediately by a good-natured, middle-aged Irishman, who promptly ushered them into a neatly furnished office.

A short, fussy man of forty came bustling out of an adjoining apartment, and saluting the boys, exclaimed:

"Ah! What can I do for you, young gentlemen?"

"We came in answer to an advertisement we saw in the paper," responded the New York boy.

"Ah!"

"You are the gentleman who had it inserted, are you not?" ventured the boy from the country.

"Yes."

Then there was a silence of fully a minute, during which the old man scanned them from head to foot.

"Will we do?" asked Steve, smiling in spite of himself.

"Yes! Sit down."

The pair dropped into convenient chairs, and the old man and the son of Erin followed their example.

Just then there came a knock at the door, and when the Irishman opened it, half a dozen young men were disclosed standing in the corridor.

"We came in answer to the advertisement," said one.

"Tell them to go back again, O'Brien. They are not on time; it is four minutes past three o'clock," observed the man.

"Yez are too late, gintlemen, so plaze be after returnin' as quietly as yez came," said Patrick, and he shut the door.

"Now, then, young gentlemen, your names?"

"James Wakely."

"Stephen Whitely."

"Are you looking for work?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will hire you, then, at a salary of fifty dollars a month and your board."

"Wha-at!" gasped the astonished boys.

"I said I would hire you at a salary of fifty dollars a month each and your board; and I will guarantee that the work you are to do is strictly honorable."

"We'll take the job, sir!" gasped Jim.

"Yes—yes!" added his companion.

"Very well; you are to travel by water with me as my assistants—that is, of course, if you can produce references that you are trustworthy young men."

"I can produce a dozen!" exclaimed the young New Yorker.

"And I cannot produce one, as I ran away from the farmer I was living with," the country boy said, with a voice that quivered a trifle.

"I shan't take the job unless you are accepted, too!" Steve promptly exclaimed.

"See here," said the little, old man, not noticing the remarks, "I forgot to introduce myself. I am Prof. Nicodemus Jacklyn, and I am going to lead an expedition to the South Polar Sea. I am putting up the entire expense, and the expedition will consist of myself, you two boys, O'Brien, here, and the crew of the good ship *Lance*. We sail the day after to-morrow."

Before either of our young friends could make a reply to these startling words, the Irishman pulled the door open, and seizing a man by the collar, hauled him into the room.

CHAPTER II.

MATT SCAGGS AGAIN.

Steve and Jim were very much astonished at the extraordinary action of the Irishman.

On the contrary, the professor seemed more than delighted.

"You were very nicely caught, Matt Scaggs, weren't you?" he exclaimed. "Now, I want you to explain yourself, or I shall order O'Brien to break every bone in your rascally body!"

O'Brien showed that he was capable of doing it, for he held the man on the floor with an iron grip.

"Let me up, please!" gasped the prostrate fellow. "I—I—meant no harm."

"You meant no harm, did yez? Why have yez been listenin' at this door all day long, thin?" cried the Irishman.

"Yes, that's it. Why are you trying to find out what business I am engaged in?" added the professor.

"I haven't been trying to find out anything," was the reply. "I have had cause to pass the door of your office half a dozen times to-day, and I don't see why you should allow this man to jump out in this manner. If you don't let me go immediately I will have you arrested for assault."

Prof. Nicodemus Jacklyn laughed in his own peculiar way.

"It is you who will be arrested," he said, "and if your employer is not careful he will suffer the same fate."

At these words the face of the man changed color. He cast an uneasy glance at the door, as though he was looking for a chance to escape.

Our two young friends remained seated, and looked at the proceedings in amazement.

They concluded that the fellow called Matt Scaggs was a villain. His appearance, at any rate, betokened that he was; there was a sort of sneaking look about him, and his countenance reminded them of the villain in a play.

"Let me go, and I promise you I will never come near you again," said Scaggs, in a pleading voice.

There was such a truthful gleam in his eyes at that moment that the son of Erin involuntarily released his hold upon him.

Then it was that something happened that was entirely unexpected.

With the quickness of a cat Matt Scaggs struck O'Brien in the face, and then bolted for the door.

Before anyone could prevent him he had opened it and was outside.

He was just in time to catch the elevator going down, and as Steve and Jim started in pursuit of him the professor called them back.

"Let him go," said he. "I hardly think he will come around again. He is the hired tool of a rival of mine, who is trying hard to find out what I am up to."

"Begob! an' I think he heard somethin' that was after bein' said," observed O'Brien, with a shake of his head.

"If he did it will do him no good, for I have made up

my mind that the *Lance* shall sail to-morrow, instead of the day after," was the rejoinder.

"Can the young gentlemen get ready in that toime?" asked the Irishman, as he turned his eyes upon the boys.

"We can be ready at an hour's notice," exclaimed Steve, who was almost jubilant at the thought of going to sea on an exploring vessel.

Jim was a little dubious about venturing upon the briny deep, but he did not hesitate to coincide with what his companion said.

"Meet me at the Hoboken Ferry, foot of Barclay Street, at 11:30 to-night," said Prof. Jacklyn. "You need not stock up with clothing; I have all the necessities on board the *Lance*."

"Very well, sir," retorted Steve.

"And kape yez eyes peeled, so yez are sure that scoundrel of a Matt Scaggs does not be after gittin' on yez track," spoke up O'Brien.

"We will endeavor to show you that we are the kind who are not easily caught napping," observed Jim. "Even if I am from the country, I am not to be fooled by anyone."

The professor nodded.

"Don't forget your appointment," he said, as the two passed from the office.

The boys assured him that they would not, and in a much easier frame of mind than when they came in they made their way to the bustling thoroughfare.

Money was an article that was limited with them, but they concluded to have a first-class dinner before they went aboard the ship.

Steve led the way to a restaurant that was patronized by Wall Street men, and they were soon engaged in putting away the good things set before them.

They went to a theatre that night, and Jim enjoyed himself as only a boy from the country can when he witnesses a play for the first time.

"Now, to keep our engagement," observed the New York boy, as they arose from their seats when the curtain went down for the last time.

"It isn't such an awful walk to the Barclay Street Ferry, so we may as well foot it, I guess," he went on. "We can do it, and be there ten minutes ahead of time."

"Just as you say," nodded Jim.

They walked down Broadway until they came to the post office, and then turned down Park Place.

Just why he led the way down this street, instead of going a block farther to Barclay, Steve did not know; but he made up his mind a minute or two later that it must have been fate that caused them to take that street.

Half a block down a man came across the street and peered sharply into the faces of the boys.

Then he hurried along in the direction of the river.

But he did not turn away too quick for Jim Wakely to recognize him.

It was Matt Scaggs, the man who had escaped from Prof. Jacklyn's office that afternoon!

The boy from the country immediately whispered this piece of intelligence to his companion.

"Are you sure?" exclaimed Steve, excitedly.

"I know it was him! When I once take a good look at a face I never forget it," was the answer.

"Let us follow him, then."

"Certainly. It will be best to keep the professor posted about that man as much as we can."

Quickening their pace, they kept the fellow in sight until they came to the corner of Washington Street.

Scaggs entered a saloon in this neighborhood, and they drew back in the shadow of an awning to wait till he came out.

Ten minutes passed, and he did not show up.

Steve glanced at his watch. It lacked but a minute of the time they had agreed to meet Prof. Jacklyn, and they had still two blocks to travel.

"We can wait no longer!" exclaimed the young New Yorker. "Come! we must keep our appointment, or we might lose our job."

At a sharp pace the pair started for the ferry.

As they passed inside they beheld the professor and his man, O'Brien, waiting for them.

"We are a minute or two behind," panted Steve; and then, in a whisper, he told the reason.

"Matt Scaggs, eh?" snorted the old man. "Well, I am afraid he will be too late to find out anything. In less than an hour from now the *Lance* will be on her way to the South Pole!"

CHAPTER III.

DANGER.

Twelve hours later the ship *Lance* was on the ocean, outside of Sandy Hook, and entirely out of sight of land.

Prof. Nicodemus Jacklyn was worth about three millions when he conceived the idea of leading an exploring expedition to the Antarctic Ocean.

Consequently the *Lance* was built as strong as any vessel could be. She was in reality a screw steamer, but as steam power was only to be used in cases of extreme necessity, she was rigged as a three-masted schooner.

Her cargo consisted entirely of provisions and coal, and it was estimated that there was enough of the former to last three years.

The crew of the *Lance* consisted of twenty-four men—captain, mates, engineers, firemen, machinist, carpenters and sailors.

Prof. Jacklyn had been a long time in selecting them, as

he did not want a man in his crew who could not be trusted.

As in the case of Steve and Jim, when he once saw a man who would suit him, according to his judgment, he would not be many minutes in hiring him, recommendation or no recommendation.

One peculiarity about the *Lance* was that the quarters of the crew were fitted up the same as the cabin. And, what is more, every person on board ate the same grade of provender.

The professor was not a mean man by any means, and he wanted his employees to live as well as he did.

He gave them good wages and furnished all the clothing they would need during the cruise.

Besides the provisions and coal, the *Lance* carried a good supply of arms and ammunition, and taking it all in all, she was fitted out as complete as a ship could be.

Prof. Jacklyn had only one thing to worry him, which was that his relatives were opposed to him spending so much money in what they declared to be a foolhardy undertaking.

He had refused to listen to them all along, and had succeeded in shutting them all off, save a brother-in-law, who was not known for his strictly honest dealings.

This man was named John Spottswood, and he was determined to gain possession of some of the money the professor had.

In their last interview the owner of the *Lance* informed Spottswood that he need not be alarmed about the fortune he possessed, as, to make sure it would be safe until he returned, he had converted it into cash and government bonds, and would take it with him on his ship.

This set the schemer to thinking, and he hired Matt Scaggs to nose about the professor and try and learn when the *Lance* was to sail. For when she did sail Scaggs was to go with her, in case he could not get hold of the fortune before, and when he came back he was to place it in the hands of his employer and receive forty per cent. of the profits.

A very pretty little scheme for a man's brother-in-law to work against him!

Scaggs succeeded in learning the name of the exploring ship, and where she was anchored, but he could not get aboard, try as he might.

But luck seemed to be with him, for not ten minutes after he made his escape from the office of the professor he met a machinist with whom he had formerly worked.

Scaggs had been a pretty honest fellow when they had worked together, and the machinist still thought him so.

Before they parted he promised to get the villain a job as fireman aboard a ship that was to start on a three years' cruise in a day or so.

When he was told that the name of the vessel was the

Lance, Scaggs could scarcely conceal the satisfaction he felt.

"The man whose place you are to fill was taken sick with the typhoid fever yesterday, and I was told to get a competent fellow as a substitute," said the machinist. "You, of course, will have to be examined by the boss of the expedition before you are hired; but that will be an easy thing; my recommendation will carry you through."

Matt Scaggs reckoned it would be anything but an easy thing to pass a successful examination before the professor, but he was determined to get aboard the *Lance* at all hazards.

The villain gave an address where he could be telephoned to, and the two parted.

And, when the machinist was informed that the ship was to sail that night shortly after midnight, he promptly telephoned to Scaggs to be on hand before that time.

The scheming villain waited until nearly the last minute before he started for the ship, and thus it happened that he came across the two boys, who were bound for the same place.

When he went into the saloon he immediately passed out of a side door and hastened to the spot where he was to meet his friend, the machinist.

He found him soon enough, and got aboard all right.

And he escaped being brought before the professor, because that individual was too busy to think about it.

It was not until the next day, shortly after the hour of one, that the professor thought about the newly engaged fireman. He was standing on the deck, with Steve Whitely and Jim Wakely near him, when it occurred to him.

He immediately called one of the officers and spoke about it.

A few minutes later Matt Scaggs was brought before him.

If a thunderbolt had struck the mainmast of the vessel, Prof. Jacklyn could not have been more astounded, and Steve and Jim could scarcely believe their eyes.

"You here, Matt Scaggs?" thundered the professor, when he could find the use of his tongue. "How dare you show your face aboard my ship?"

"I was hired to come aboard as a fireman," was the bold retort.

This fact being proven a few minutes later, the old gentleman knew not what to do.

At first he was for turning the ship back and setting the villain ashore; but, being a trifle superstitious, he concluded that it would bring bad luck upon the expedition if he turned back.

So he resolved to keep Scaggs and allow him to work as a fireman, but he informed every member of the crew of his bad character.

And the daring villain, who had risked so much to get aboard the *Lance*, saw that he was likely to have a decidedly unpleasant voyage.

The days passed, and finally the weeks began to roll around.

At last the good ship *Lance* left the gloomy shores of Cape Horn astern and went on her course—directly south.

It was shortly after this that very ugly weather was encountered.

It became so cold that the rigging was covered with ice, and it was hardly safe to venture on deck for over a minute or two at a time.

Matt Scaggs became very much dissatisfied with his berth.

He wished a thousand times that he had never entered into the scheme to rob the professor of his fortune.

And his evil nature told him that some one ought to suffer for the plight he was in.

The more he brooded over this the more he became resolved to do something desperate.

At length he became insane on the subject, and he got ready to commit a wholesale murder.

He laid his plans to kill the professor, his two young assistants and the Irishman!

And he was going to do it by stabbing them to the heart while they slept!

That very night, while the storm raged fiercely, and the waves ran high, he sneaked into the cabin.

The excitement caused by the perilous position of the ship during the past twenty-four hours had completely worn them out, and, one by one, our friends had dropped off to sleep.

Scaggs crept forward, knife in hand, and at length paused before a berth.

It contained Steve Whitely!

The would-be murderer raised the gleaming blade aloft, and with a maniacal gleam in his eyes, prepared to strike!

CHAPTER IV.

BEAUTY SUSPENDED FROM THE CLOUDS.

Steve Whitely was not doomed to die by the hand of an assassin.

Just at the very instant the knife was about to descend the bow of the ship went crashing against a floe of ice.

The shock not only threw Matt Scaggs off his feet, but fairly flung the sleepers from their bunks.

Steve and Jim were upon their feet almost instantly.

By aid of the dim light from the cabin lamp they beheld Scaggs staggering to his feet, the knife still clasped in his hand.

His presence suggested that something was wrong, and the knife—well, the boys shuddered as they comprehended their narrow escape.

Like a cyclone they swooped upon the villain and took the weapon from him.

Just as they had accomplished this O'Brien appeared on the scene.

The *Lance* was pounding about against the broken ice so badly that the noise made it almost impossible to hear what was being said, but Steve managed to make the Irishman understand what Scaggs had been up to.

O'Brien seized a rope, and in very short order he had the would-be murderer bound hand and foot.

Steve and Jim quickly made themselves ready and hastened out on deck.

It was so cold that their breath was nearly taken away as they emerged from the warm cabin.

They soon learned, from one of the watch, that the vessel was now clear of the floe, and that no damage had been done.

So the boys returned to the cabin again.

The engines were going, and the ship was still slowly making for the south.

Our young friends found the professor standing before Scaggs and giving him a good talking to.

"You are to remain a prisoner from now until we get back to New York," they heard him say. "I shall have a chain put on you, one end connected with your right wrist and the other with your left ankle. O'Brien, you will see that attended to the first thing after daylight arrives."

"All roight, sir," the son of Erin replied; "it shall be jist as you order, sir."

And so it was. The next morning the chain was secured to the villain in the manner designated by the professor, and Scaggs was sent back to his work.

Twelve hours later the fury of the storm had been spent, and the sun shone once more.

Observations were taken, and the professor was pleased to learn that they had reached a point a hundred and twenty miles southeast of South Shelter Island.

And, strange to say, the weather was fairly moderate.

"Are you really in search of the South Pole?" Jim one day asked the professor, after he had been giving a lengthy talk on the subject of "Unknown Lands Beyond the Ice."

"I shall not give up the search until I am forced to from lack of provisions and fuel," was the reply.

"And you think, if the *Lance* can get far enough through the ice, we will find land that is habitable?" spoke up Steve.

"Certainly I do."

"Well, the *Lance* will get through, if any boat can."

"She will get through."

"But suppose we get stuck between two floes?" Jim ventured.

"Then the result of my inventive genius will come into play. We will saw our way through by steam power."

Two weeks passed. The *Lance* had not made over fifty miles in the direction she was pointed.

But still the professor was confident that he would at length reach the goal.

Another week went and found the good ship wedged hard and fast into the ice, and a violent snowstorm in full blast.

For twenty-four hours the snow continued to fall, and then it cleared.

The white, feathery mass was piled high above the decks, and when the sun, which appeared to be so obstinate in that region, came out, there was naught to see but one stretch of glittering whiteness.

Warmly clad in their costumes of fur Steve and Will ascended the rigging so as to get a better view of things.

They made their way clean to the cradle of the foremast, and when they got there they were disappointed, for a thick haze had set in, and they could not see a hundred feet away from them.

"This is too bad," said Steve. "I thought we might be able to catch a glimpse of open water."

"So did I," Jim answered. "But suppose we wait a few moments? Perhaps the haze will go away as quickly as it came."

"That is so."

"It is pretty cold up here, isn't it?"

"Yes, but not as cold as one would think it to be in this latitude."

"But it is cold enough. I——"

Jim did not finish the sentence, for the shrill scream of a female rang out apparently directly over their heads.

The pair looked at each other in consternation.

Their surprise was so great that they nearly lost their hold upon the rigging.

"Wh-a-a-t——" gasped Steve.

"Save me! Oh, save me!" came a voice so near them that it fairly rang in their ears.

At that instant the haze lifted as if by magic, and suspended from a rope, not ten feet above them, the boys beheld the form of a beautiful girl clad in furs!

CHAPTER V.

EMMA HUNTINGTON.

Suspended from the sky!

That was what the girl appeared to be when Steve Whitely and Jim Wakely first saw her.

But, no! The mist had entirely cleared now, and less than a hundred feet above the ship's topmasts a huge balloon, with monster, gull-like wings, was floating in the air.

And the girl was suspended from that!

The boys took all this in before ten seconds had passed,

and it is possible that they would have remained powerless to act some little time longer, had not something happened to call them to their senses.

The rope began paying out from the balloon, and the girl descended to within two feet of them.

Involuntarily Steve put out his hand and seized her, and Jim quickly followed his example.

Then down came the rope, whirling through the frosty air like a monster snake in its death struggles.

"Thank God!"

It was the girl who uttered this fervent exclamation.

Then she became a dead weight in the arms of the boys, for she had fainted.

A peculiar, whirring noise was heard, and, looking up, our young friends saw the balloon skimming away through the air like an immense bird.

"It is a flying machine!" Steve gasped.

"Yes," answered Jim. "Let us go below with this strange young lady; she might freeze to death if we stay up here too long."

"Come on. Of all the wonderful things I ever heard of, I think this one caps the climax!"

Swiftly, but cautiously, the two descended the ratlines with their unconscious burden.

Prof. Jacklyn was on deck, and he nearly fainted when he saw what the boys had in their arms.

He had seen the air ship as it flew away, but was not aware that it had left anything aboard his vessel.

"What in the name of wonder have we here?" he exclaimed.

"A young lady," panted Steve. "She was lowered from a balloon that just went over us."

"We must get her where it is warm as soon as possible," added Jim.

"Cer—certainly!" and the professor waddled after them in a bewildered manner.

O'Brien was equal to the occasion, however, and he quickly pushed out the lounge in the cabin to receive the unconscious burden the boys carried.

"This sames to be a miracle, I'm after thinkin'," the Irishman observed. "Get some brandy and rub the poor creature's wrists."

Steve and Jim flew to obey, and after five minutes the girl opened her eyes.

"Am I saved, after all?" she feebly asked.

"Yes, you are in the hands of friends," answered the professor. "Do you feel strong enough to talk?"

"Oh, yes," and her eyes brightened.

"Would it not be advisable to take off your wraps?" Steven ventured. "It is warm here in the cabin."

"Thank you."

The girl arose and acted on the New York boy's suggestion.

Prof. Jacklyn had now entirely recovered his composure, and he hastened to furnish her with a glass of some light wine.

"Now I will tell you my story in a very few words," their visitor began. "My father's ship, the *Emma Huntington*, foundered about two hundred miles off the coast of Brazil. My mother and myself were on board, and—and, to make a long story short, she was drowned, along with papa and the crew. I was the only one who escaped a watery grave, and how it was I scarcely know.

"I found myself in the water clinging to a tangled maze of ropes attached to a spar. I had courage and strength enough to lash myself fast.

"Then I fainted, and when I at length came to I was alone—alone on the bosom of the Atlantic, with naught to greet my anxious eyes but the dark-green water and the sky!

"But it was not long before I discovered a dark speck in the sky. It kept growing larger all the while, and it appeared so strange that I became fascinated and could not take my eyes from it.

"Nearer and nearer it came, and presently assumed the proportions of a mammoth bird.

"A few minutes later I comprehended what it was. It was some sort of a flying machine, for I could see a man in it with a glass directed at me.

"I waved my hand and gave a frantic cry for help, and then again I fainted.

"When I came to I was in a little place not over ten by four feet, and with a very low ceiling. Two men sat before me, and they promptly introduced themselves as the Bach Brothers, inventors.

"They told me I was in a flying machine bound for the South Pole, and that, as they had no room for me, they would contrive to put me aboard the first ship they came across.

"That was three days ago, and owing to the terrible storm that has been raging, we did not sight a ship until we came upon yours half buried in the snow.

"The moment the inventors sighted it they ordered me to put on the garments of fur you found me in, and then, before I was aware of what they intended to do, a rope was tied beneath my arms. One of the men opened a trapdoor in the bottom of the car and forced me down through it, while the other steered the air ship.

"The next thing I knew I saw two human beings, and a moment later I was seized and held fast. That is all of my story."

"Remarkable! Remarkable!" exclaimed the professor. "Well, Miss——"

"Emma Huntington—my father's ship was named after me. I forgot to tell my name before," interrupted the girl.

"Well, Miss Huntington, I assure you that you will be

more welcome aboard my ship that you were in the air ship."

"Thank you!" she returned, fervently.

Steve and Jim were astonished beyond measure at the remarkable story told by Emma Huntington.

While they believed every word—what they had witnessed with their own eyes was sufficient to make them believe it—they could hardly realize that it was possible.

An air ship bound for the South Pole!

It was more than probable that it would get there before Prof. Jacklyn did—if he ever got there!

The extraordinary arrival of Miss Emma Huntington created no little excitement among the crew of the *Lance*.

Some of them were satisfied to have her aboard, but there were others who declared she was bound to bring bad luck upon the expedition.

Whether she brought good luck or bad, or any luck at all, the reader will learn by the perusal of this story.

CHAPTER VI.

LAND AHEAD!

Now that the snow had ceased to fall, the professor determined to work a passage through the ice.

His plan was to use dynamite, of which there was an ample supply on board, and he gave the order to those who were to handle the dangerous explosive to proceed at once.

The crew of the *Lance* consisted of practical men, and each man was fully capable of doing what was required of him—even to the villain, Matt Scaggs.

Two of the men were selected to discharge dynamite cartridges at points where they would be likely to do the most good; and Steve and Jim went along with them, at their own request.

All four were armed with rifles, revolvers and knives, and the professor, glass in hand, watched them as they stepped off the deck upon the hard frozen surface of the snow.

The boys were cautious of the dynamite their companions carried, and when the first cartridge was laid they drew back to a safe distance, thinking it would explode right away.

But when they saw one of the men produce a coil of fine copper wire and begin uncoiling it, they began to think differently.

"We will lay three cartridges, the farthest about half a mile from the ship," said one, in answer to an inquiry from Jim.

"And then you will explode them by means of a battery in the cabin," added Steve.

"Exactly."

"Then there won't be any danger of us getting swallowed up when the ice breaks," said the country boy.

"No; it wouldn't do for us to remain here."

This sort of business was entirely new to the boys, so they watched the proceedings with interest.

They helped dig the snow away, and saw the cartridges placed and the wires attached.

One of the men remained near a stake to which the wire was attached until the other had proceeded to the ship with the coil.

He then removed the stake and followed.

Prof. Jacklyn himself sat at the keyboard of the battery, and when every man on board had been notified of what was going to occur, he pressed sharply on a knob.

Boom-m! A terrific explosion followed, and the *Lance* trembled from stem to stern.

A series of sharp reports followed, and the professor rubbed his hands satisfactorily.

"I guess we'll get through now!" he exclaimed. "Pass word for the engines to be started."

Steve and Jim went on deck. The crew were just clearing the last of the snow away, and the deck presented its usual appearance.

Casting their eyes southward, the boys were surprised to see a number of slanting streaks in the snow-covered surface.

"That is water!" exclaimed the young New Yorker. "We will be able to get through for some little distance, at any rate."

Even as he spoke the *Lance* began slowly forging ahead.

The ice snapped and cracked on all sides, but the sharp prow of the powerful vessel cut its way through.

It seemed that the huge floe had split almost in the center, and at half-stroke the *Lance* proceeded on her way southward.

For two days this continued, and then a wide, open channel was reached.

The crew were suffering considerably from extreme cold, so the professor ordered them to keep below as much as possible.

In another week he calculated that there would be a general breaking up, as it was about time for the polar summer to begin.

And the learned man was right. Six days later they found themselves in comparatively clear water, and with the thermometer registering twenty-two degrees above zero.

"This is glorious!" exclaimed Emma Huntington, as she stood on the deck at the side of Steve and surveyed the scene. "It is almost warm enough for a spring day."

The sufferings of the girl had made her wan and thin, but she was fast recovering and her cheeks glowed with excitement at the present moment.

"I wonder if ever we will find the pole?" Steve said, half-musingly. "Others have tried it and failed."

"The professor claims that we are farther south now than anyone else has been and returned," the girl said, softly. "If we do get there I wonder if we will find people there."

"If we find anybody there it will most likely be the Bach brothers. If they couldn't get to the pole with their air ship no one else could."

"Then you do not think the place is inhabited—that is, if it is composed of land?"

"I hardly think so."

"What is the use of men risking their lives in trying to discover it, then?"

"That is so;" and the boy nodded as he saw the wisdom of the remark.

While the young couple stood there talking Matt Scaggs passed them, the chain attached to him clanking dismally as he moved along.

"I feel sorry for that man," exclaimed Emma. "I think he has been punished enough, and I am going to ask the professor to order the chain removed from him."

Scaggs overheard this remark, and he looked gratefully at the girl; though when his eyes turned to Steve, a fierce scowl came over his face.

"I don't think it is advisable to bother about the scoundrel," the boy replied, as he moved toward the cabin with his companion.

"But I will bother about him," and the girl showed that she was persistent.

She promptly sought out the professor and pleaded with him that the chain should be removed from Scaggs.

The result was that the learned man gave in to her, and the rascally fireman was freed from the incumbrance that had been upon him for so many days.

He promised to behave himself in the future, but he had no idea of keeping the promise.

He had registered a vow long ago to kill the professor, his Irish servant and the two boys, and he meant to keep it, even if he died the next minute after the deed was accomplished.

But he concluded to bide his time.

Day after day passed by. The *Lance* kept on making fair headway. Twenty-five miles a day was an excellent average, the professor thought.

Meanwhile the short summer was rapidly drifting away, and the exploring ship was steadily forcing her way southward.

Prof. Jacklyn became jubilant.

"We will reach the pole!" he exclaimed, "even if we never get back again. We are within a hundred and fifty miles of it now."

"And a strange current has got hold of us which is

drifting us that way," added the captain, with a shrug of his shoulders. "It isn't likely we will find one to favor us so when we start to come back."

"Never mind the coming back part," retorted the professor.

Before anything further could be said the man who had been sent aloft with a glass reported land to the southwest.

CHAPTER VII.

SCAGGS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"What land do you suppose that can be?" asked Steve of the professor, as he gazed through a glass at the dark line that showed up in the southwest.

"What land is it?" echoed the head of the expedition; "why, it is the land upon which the South Pole is located, to be sure! What else could it be? The result of our last observation showed conclusively that we were much farther south than any discoverer has been. Gentlemen, we are beyond the ice! See that broad stretch of clear water to the south!"

What Prof. Jacklyn spoke was the truth.

The *Lance* had successfully worked her way through the ice many miles beyond the farthest point heretofore known.

Perhaps it was luck that did it; but anyhow she was there, with all on board hale and hearty!

Clear water was close by, and the thermometer was going up!

The next day at noon the professor, captain and mate met on the deck for the purpose of taking their reckoning.

The sun was shining as brightly as it could, for that latitude, but the instruments did not work with any degree of success.

"We are close enough to the pole to satisfy me that it is somewhere on the land we see over there," said the professor, with a satisfied air. "When we go ashore we will wait for a good opportunity and get our exact latitude and longitude, or else find that we have reached the spot where neither exist."

The *Lance* was now forging through comparatively clear water. Her sails were spread, and she glided along without the aid of steam.

And, what was more, the vessel appeared to be in as good order as when she left New York, which was over five months before.

Straight for the land her bowsprit pointed, and there was not a person on board who was not anxious to get there.

The nearer they got the more desolate the land appeared.

It was necessary to keep throwing the lead every few minutes to ascertain the depth of the water in the huge

lake, which was locked on one side by a belt of ice and on the other by a desolate shore.

The temperature was now high enough for the men to work bare-handed, and this, together with the fact that they were nearing land, caused them to sing snatches of sea songs in a cheery manner.

There was one man on board who was more anxious to get ashore than any of the rest, and that was Matt Scaggs.

As soon as he heard the cry of "Land ho!" he began thinking about deserting the ship, and in less than half an hour he had settled upon a plan to take "French leave."

While the rest of the crew were singing away at their work, and watching the unknown coast they were nearing, the villain was not idle.

He contrived to gather together a bag of provisions, a repeating rifle, a revolver, a knife and a sufficient supply of cartridges.

He stole these articles from the cabin with little or no difficulty, and then placed them in the ship's boat that swung from the davits over the port side, near the stern.

As the pilot house was forward, and all hands had gathered near the bow, he was not seen while doing this.

Now came the difficult task of lowering the boat into the water unaided.

But Scaggs was cool as he was desperate, and he contrived to do it, as the tackle worked as easily as the wheels of a clock.

Noiselessly he dropped into the boat, and two strokes of his knife sent him adrift.

"Now for the shore!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "I will establish quarters there, and watch my chance to kill off my enemies, one by one. I'll do this, even if I never get back to New York to report to John Spottswood!"

Picking up an oar, he paddled away from the ship.

When he had placed himself within three hundred yards of her, he began rowing for the shore with all his might.

He saw the *Lance* heave to a few minutes later and drop her anchor, and he chuckled as he saw his absence had not been discovered.

Steadily he pulled on, and at length he was a mile away from our friends.

Matt Scaggs eased up on his oars and began singing the chorus of a rollicking song.

He felt happy, though he had no idea how he was going to make out when he got ashore.

"Keep me in chains, will they?" he cried; "well, we will see if I don't make them pay pretty dear for it. If this is the South Pole I will be the one to get the credit of discovering it. If half those aboard the *Lance* were dead and out of the way I would soon be able to bring the others to terms. I was born to be a leader, and not the

follower of a fool, who is blessed with more money than brains. Pull for the shore, Matt Scaggs! You are not the dumbest man in the world, by any means!"

Lustily the fellow swung the oars and the boat shot over the smooth water in an oblique direction for the shore.

When he landed Scaggs pulled the boat high and dry and then turned his gaze to the *Lance*.

As yet no boat had put off from her, but he could see that one was being lowered.

And he was also satisfied that those on board were aware of what he had done.

"I must strike inland," the villain muttered, "for if they catch me they will most likely make a prisoner of me. What sort of a country is this, anyway? It ain't very inviting, to say the most."

He turned to the boat, and, realizing that he could not carry it with him, picked up the things he had brought with him and turned his back to the water.

It was not so very cold, but a raw wind that chilled him to the very marrow was whistling about his ears.

The country sloped upward from the sea, and at a quick pace Matt Scaggs set out over the hard, yellow soil.

The farther he progressed the steeper the slope seemed to be, and, when he had walked about a mile, he was so tired that he was compelled to halt for a rest.

It was gradually getting colder, too, and, as the villain had failed to bring his heavy fur coat, he began shivering like a half-starved dog.

He almost wished he had remained aboard the *Lance*.

But Matt Scaggs possessed considerable pluck, and, with the thought that he must surely strike something better pretty soon, he once more pushed his way up the hill.

When he set out from the ship he noticed that the sun was pretty well down to the line of the horizon, and it was now in the same spot.

It was not shining with any degree of brightness, either, and no warmth came from it.

"I wouldn't be surprised if that fool of a professor will find the pole somewhere around here," he muttered. "If I should walk right upon it I wouldn't know it, so there is no use for me to think about looking for it. I am getting close to the top of this hill now, and when I get there I will stop and take a look around me."

Fifteen minutes later he came to the top of the long slope.

And as the villain looked before him a cry of delight came from his lips.

In a broad valley, far beneath him, he beheld ample signs of vegetation!

But that was not all. He could dimly see living beings moving about here and there!

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Scaggs, after he had gazed long

and earnestly at the scene; "this is nowhere near the South Pole, after all! We have probably struck the coast of South Shetland. That fool of a professor has been wrong in his calculations."

The fellow had scarcely arrived at this conclusion when he was startled by seeing an animal resembling a goat running toward him.

An arrow was sticking in the creature's side, and involuntarily Scaggs raised his rifle and brought the wounded goat to the ground.

The echoes of the report had scarcely died away when a curious little man, not over three feet in height, appeared on the scene.

He was attired in a costume of skin, and armed with a bow and arrows.

"Hello!" exclaimed Scaggs. "Who are you?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PIGMIES.

The *Lance* was less than a quarter of mile from shore when her anchor went down.

It was not until fully ten minutes later that Matt Scaggs' absence was discovered.

In sweeping his glass along the coast the mate saw him just as he was about to land upon the beach.

The professor was quite wrathful when he found that the rascal had deserted the ship.

"He signed articles for three years," he exclaimed, "and now he has dared to leave the vessel without first getting permission."

"Yez can't expect anything else of ther dirty loafer," said O'Brien. "Wasn't he after killin' us all? Ther young lady made a big mistake when she got yez to take ther chain off him. Scaggs will be after givin' us lots of trouble yet, see if he don't."

"I guess you are right," spoke up Steve.

"I am sure he is right," Jim added.

"Well, never mind it now. We will be on the lookout for him. We ought not to be afraid of one man," and the professor shrugged his shoulders.

"Are you going ashore?" the sailing master ventured to ask.

"Yes, right away. Would you like to go with us, Mr. Androvett?"

"Yes, sir; I would like to see what sort of a country it is."

"Then you shall be one of the party. Steve, Jim and O'Brien shall go, too. That will be sufficient for the first trip ashore, I think. When we come back those of the crew who desire to may go."

"How about me, professor?" a low, musical voice at his elbow asked.

Emma Huntington stood near, and there was such an appealing look in her bright eyes when she asked the question that the learned man promptly replied:

"Yes, if you wish, Miss Huntington."

"I am so glad," and the girl hurried to the portion of the cabin that had been set aside for her use to make ready for the trip ashore.

"I think we had better arm ourselves," observed Capt. Androvett; "there is no telling what we might meet before we get back."

"I agree with you," returned the professor. "We must be on the alert for danger, and keep a special watch for the appearance of Matt Scaggs."

In fifteen minutes the party was ready to go ashore. The boat was lowered, and under the hearty strokes of two sailors it went gliding for the desolate beach.

They landed at a point nearly a mile below the spot where Scaggs had left the other boat, and they soon observed a natural roadway leading up the hill.

"There is nothing to see here on the beach; suppose we walk up the hill a ways and take an observation," Steve suggested.

"That is the proper thing to do," the professor hastened to answer.

At a brisk pace they set out.

Halfway up they paused for a rest, and surveyed the scene they had left behind them.

The *Lance*, anchored in a little bay, made quite a pleasing picture, and she was the only thing the eye could see that suggested anything like civilization, or anything made by human hands.

The distance to the summit of the slope was much longer than it appeared to be, but, nothing daunted, our friends pressed on.

Emma Huntington declared that she was not tired, and this served to ease the minds of the others.

Keeping steadily on, they at length reached the top.

When their eyes rested upon the same scene Matt Scaggs had gazed upon but a short time before, cries of delight left the lips of our friends.

"In the center of yon valley we will find the pole!" exclaimed Prof. Jacklyn, rubbing his hands. "I always believed that the climate was balmy at both poles. It is the eternal belt of ice that shuts off the rest of the world from them that makes the severe cold. We are the luckiest mortals in the universe, for we have discovered a new land, which I have no doubt is as large as the State of New York. I am going to lead the way down into this valley that is located beyond the ice. Come!"

Rifle in hand, the enthusiastic man started down the hill, the others following.

When they reached the first signs of genuine vegetation they sat down to rest.

"I guess there will be no danger after you get to the foot of the hill."

"Thank you!" exclaimed the girl.

With their eyes fixed on the pigmies, who were half-concealed in the woods, our friends proceeded to retreat.

The vicious little fellows made no attempt to follow them, but watched their every movement keenly enough.

When they came to the spot where they had made their first halt in the valley Prof. Jacklyn said they had gone far enough, and told Jim to take Emma back to the *Lance* and bring twenty of the crew back with him.

The boy promptly set out with his fair charge, and the rest of the party watched them until their forms were lost to view behind a ridge on the hillside.

"We will have reinforcements in an hour," the professor observed, as he lighted his pipe, preparatory to having a good smoke. "We must find out what sort of people these dwarfs are and what they subsist on. Perhaps if we go back with a large body of men they will not offer to attack us again. If we can make friends with them, so much the better will it be for ourselves and science."

"I think ourselves come in away ahead of science," spoke up Androvett.

"This expedition set out partly for the benefit of science," said the learned man, and he puffed on his pipe in a manner that showed the captain he was not to argue the question any further.

"Begob! I don't belave the little devils want us here in ther valley at all!" cried O'Brien, suddenly. "See! they are after comin' out of ther woods!"

This was indeed the case. Evidently the pigmies had resolved to make another attack, for their actions showed that they were getting ready for it.

After a great deal of running about they suddenly headed for our friends at a sharp walk.

And they came in countless numbers, too!

To use an old saying, "the woods were full of them."

Prof. Jacklyn's pipe must have been the means of putting an extra supply of courage in him, for when the captain made the suggestion that they had better put back for the ship at once, and leave the valley to the dwarfs, he stamped his foot emphatically and exclaimed:

"If we put back it will be against my wishes. We can subdue these little fellows easy enough, if we only go about it in the right way."

"Pray tell us the right way, then," Androvett answered, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"We will march down to meet them with a flag of truce."

Neither of the rest thought this good policy, but they said nothing.

The professor quickly tied a white handkerchief to the

muzzle of his rifle, and started boldly to meet the army of approaching pigmies.

The others followed, as a matter of course, but they had their rifles in such positions that they could use them at an instant's notice.

When they were within five hundred feet of the dwarfs a startling thing occurred.

The little fiends, who numbered perhaps three or four hundred, suddenly spread out in fan shape, and came swooping down upon them with a speed that was amazing.

Nothing daunted by this move, the professor kept on, waving his flag of truce as he went.

"We are in for it now!" exclaimed Steve. "Come, professor, turn back! We have got to run for our lives! They do not recognize the flag of truce."

"That is so; they must be heathens, I guess;" and becoming badly frightened once more, the stout old gentleman lowered his rifle and began legging it as fast as he could in the direction of the hill.

The others could run faster than he, but they dared not do so for fear of leaving him behind.

The professor's plan to make friends was destined to prove a miserable failure, for the pigmies, in spite of their short legs, gained rapidly upon them.

Steve saw that it would only be a question of five minutes before they would be overtaken.

"We may as well make a stand and fight it out," he said. "If we run much farther we will be too much out of breath to make any resistance."

"You're right," retorted the captain. "Turn and give them a dose of lead!"

Two seconds later they stopped and dropped to their knees.

The next instant they opened fire, keeping up the shooting until the magazines of their rifles were empty.

But the galling fire did not serve to stop the now enraged horde of pigmies.

They came on faster than before, and soon were swarming about the unfortunate explorers like a hive of bees.

And for some strange reason they did not attempt to slay them with their arrows or spears!

"They propose to take us alive," said the captain, quickly. "We may as well surrender before they change their minds and make sieves of our bodies."

Prof. Jacklyn at once threw down his rifle, and held up his hands in token of submission. A minute later the four were prisoners.

CHAPTER X.

MATT SCAGGS IS LUCKY.

Jim Wakely and his charge had not gotten halfway up the incline before they became very tired.

"I do not suppose there is any use of our hurrying so fast," said the boy. "The professor did not intend that you should drop from sheer exhaustion, Miss Huntington."

"I would like to get back to the ship as soon as possible," panted the girl. "As the captain said, I should not have come at all. But it appears that I am bound to be in some kind of danger ever since I stepped upon the deck of my father's ship."

"Your experience with the flying machine was certainly a queer one," said Jim, as they trudged along at a slow pace. "I wonder what became of the wonderful invention, anyhow?"

"If they ever reached this place it is quite possible that the balloon has been shot full of arrow holes by the pigmies. Of all horrible people on earth, I think these pigmies are the worst!" and the fair girl shivered as she spoke.

"I agree with you," said Jim. "And I think the professor will wish he had left them alone before he is through with them."

The pair had now reached a peculiar sort of natural ditch, and chancing to glance into it, Jim saw something bright and shining.

Curiosity bade him see what it was, so he hastened to the spot.

A moment later he held in his hand a heavy piece of metal the size of an egg.

"What is it?" asked Emma.

"It is gold, if I can judge by what I have read of the precious metal!" the boy exclaimed, as he eagerly examined his find.

"I believe you are right," his companion hastened to reply; and she became so much interested for the time being that all her fears were allayed.

"Suppose we follow the ditch along for a little distance and see if we can find any more?" Jim suggested.

"I am willing."

"It is right on our way to the beach, anyhow."

"Yes, that is so."

Carefully the pair wended their way up the dry water-course.

Jim's keen eye saw another lump of the same stuff he held in his hand, but before he could make a move to reach it a sudden interruption occurred.

Half a dozen dwarfish figures sprang into the hollow and seized the boy and girl in a viselike grip.

That they belonged to the same tribe they had encountered so recently was plainly evident, for they were dressed and looked the same.

Emma gave a horrified shriek, and then fainted; and Jim called lustily for help.

It soon dawned upon him, however, that it was useless

to waste his breath in shouting, as they were certainly beyond the hearing of anyone who might be able to help them.

The little men seemed to be delighted at capturing the pair, and they made haste to bind them with thongs in a manner that would defy the strength of a giant to break.

The pigmies chattered among themselves, and their voices sounded like the squealing of so many pigs.

Jim's heart sank within him as he saw the unconscious girl lifted by four of the fiends and carried out of the ditch.

His feet were free, and the others soon showed him that he must use them.

He was hurried out of the ditch and conducted along behind a natural ridge for about two hundred yards.

Then the dwarfs came to a halt in a dry hollow basin, and the boy saw that there were three more of them already there and apparently in waiting.

But that was not all he saw! Lying upon the ground was the outstretched form of Matt Scaggs.

The villain was securely bound, and he looked the picture of abject misery.

"Hello, Scaggs!" exclaimed Jim, when he had recovered from his surprise. "Wish you had stayed aboard, don't you?"

"Yes," was the answer, "and I guess you wish the same."

"I do for a fact," and the boy's face clouded as he thought of the peril he was in.

"I knew some of you would be surprised. I was colared over half an hour ago, and I could tell by the way these little demons have been acting that some one from the ship was close at hand. They have been hiding around here for a long time."

"Well, misery likes company, so I suppose you are glad the young lady and I were caught."

"Yes, I am just as glad as I can be over it!" and the scoundrel forgot about his own situation and chuckled.

The pigmies noticed this, and they showed that they were keener of sense than they looked to be.

One of them went through a series of motions as though he was going to liberate Jim and the girl, and then looked at Scaggs.

Understanding what he meant, the heartless villain shook his head and said:

"Not on your life! If you are going to keep me a prisoner keep them, too."

This seemed to puzzle the dwarfs somewhat, for they did a lot of chattering among themselves, and then signified that if the prisoners would go with them peaceably they would not be hurt.

By this time the girl had recovered from her swoon,

and, trembling with fear, she gazed at the goblin-like forms about her.

"Keep up courage, Miss Huntington," Jim whispered. "We will get out of this scrape all right. See if we don't."

"I will do the best I can," was the rejoinder.

A moment later the captives were motioned to rise to their feet.

They obeyed quickly, and the fellow who was evidently the leader of the pigmies nodded approvingly.

Instead of going directly down to the valley the party marched along upon the hillside for at least a mile, and then turned down.

Jim could see nothing of the professor and those he had left behind, though he strained his eyes in every direction.

The pigmies soon struck a beaten path, and a few minutes later they entered a dense woods, which appeared to be composed principally of pine trees, by the pitchy smell.

For perhaps a mile through this the captives were conducted, and then a fine, cultivated clearing came to view.

In this were four or five huts of primitive structure, and about the doors elfish-looking little children were playing.

Jim breathed a sigh of relief when he found that the pigmies were going to stop there. He had been thinking all along that they would be taken to a large settlement of the dwarfs, and when he realized that he had but half a dozen of the little fellows to contend with he grew very hopeful of making his escape.

Matt Scaggs evidently thought something similar, for his face lighted up when they were ushered into one of the huts and the door closed and fastened upon them.

"If I don't get out of here before I'm an hour older, I'll miss my reckoning!" he exclaimed, with an exultant glance at the boy.

"How do you propose to do it?" asked Jim.

"I'll show you presently."

The villain sat down in a corner and began twisting and working his hands behind him.

The boy and his fair companion grew interested and watched his queer movements.

After ten minutes of this sort of work, during which he freely perspired from his exertions, Scaggs gave a chuckle of delight and held out his hands—free!

"How did you do it?" questioned Jim, eagerly.

"How did I do it? Why, I had a knife up my sleeve when the little demons captured me. They tied me up without removing it, and now I have succeeded in making the blade sever my bonds. It takes something better than a lot of ignorant dwarfs to get the best of me."

The villain threw aside the thongs that had held his

hands behind his back, and arose to his feet as he finished speaking.

At that moment a noise at the door was heard.

As quick as a flash Scaggs sprang to it with upraised knife.

The next moment it opened and one of the pigmy fiends entered.

He took just two steps inside, and then—

Thud! Matt Scaggs' knife clove his heart in twain!

"That's the way to fix them!" he exclaimed, as he coolly wiped the dripping blade on the sleeve of his coat. "Now, Mr. Jim Wakely, I am going to fix you in the same way!"

CHAPTER XI.

GOING WHERE?

To say that the professor and his three companions felt dejected when they found themselves lying on the ground in the midst of the pigmies, bound hand and foot, would be expressing it mildly.

They were completely disheartened and not a little frightened.

The active little fellows at once began preparations for a march, and to make sure that their captives should not escape them, they picked them up bodily and proceeded to carry them.

Four of them seized O'Brien and placed him on their shoulders as easily as if he had been no larger than the smallest pigmy among them.

The rest were treated in a similar way, and even the bulky form of the professor did not seem to be much of a load for them.

For half an hour they were carried along, the dwarfs showing themselves to be untiring.

Then it was that they entered a large village that contained at least five hundred dirty-looking huts of low structure.

The four luckless explorers were tied to as many trees in front of the largest hut in the collection, and then the queer inhabitants of the valley proceeded to indulge in a sort of jollification meeting.

After an interval of ten minutes one of them produced a goatlike animal, which was dressed and ready to cook.

A fire was started and the carcass suspended over it by means of a wooden spit.

The necessary quantity of salt was placed upon it, and soon a savory odor arose.

It was the first fresh meat our friends had laid eyes upon in many a day, and the sight and smell of it made them decidedly hungry.

It appeared that this was exactly what the pigmies wanted, for they kept pointing at it and made motions as though it would be excellent eating.

Bound to the trees, where they could see everything that was going on, our friends wondered what was in store for them.

They imagined that they would soon hear a volley of rifle shots fired by the men Jim Wakely had gone after, and though it was not near time for them to be there they kept listening for the welcome sound.

An hour passed by, but no one had yet come to their aid.

By this time the carcass was pretty well cooked, and, producing four wooden platters, one of the dwarfs cut off some slices of the roasted meat and placed it upon them.

Then a gong sounded, and out from the largest hut came the king, or ruler of the place, with a stride that was meant to be stately, though it was far from it.

He was just about three feet in height, and was very fat. He wore a gray beard that reached to his waist, and his sallow complexion made him look like some fabled gnome of ancient days.

The dress this remarkable individual wore was in at least half a dozen colors, but, like that worn by his subjects, was composed entirely of skins.

As he walked up to the captives the dwarfs bowed their heads in a respectful manner which showed that they regarded him as being somewhat above them.

Straight to our four helpless friends the king—for such we will call him for want of a better name—walked, and in a squealing voice said something to them in his own language.

Of course no one could understand him, though the professor grew interested in spite of his dangerous situation.

The learned man even tried to talk to him in all the languages he knew, but it was useless.

Four of the king's subjects now stepped up, and each picked up one of the platters containing the meat.

At a word from his majesty the savory food was placed under the noses of the captives and then drawn away again.

Then the king went back to his hut, the four carrying the meat after him.

"By the bones of my ancestors!" exclaimed O'Brien, "but that was a dirty insult! Ther little loafer! If I was free I would kick ther head off him for that."

"They are trying to tantalize us to get us to do something desperate," observed Capt. Androvett, as he gazed savagely at the pigmies.

"Do something desperate!" echoed Prof. Jacklyn; "how can we, I would like to know."

"I would show you what I would do if I was only free," growled the captain. "I would have some of that meat, if I had to lick a dozen of these runts to get it."

Meanwhile one of the pigmies was busily cutting off

slices of the meat, which he handed about to those who desired it.

Strange to say, the biggest part of the crowd refused to partake of it, and Steve wondered greatly at this.

Half an hour later there was nothing but the bones of the carcass left.

Then the king came out again and walked up to the captives.

He pointed to the professor, and one of his subjects promptly stepped up and severed the thongs that bound him to the tree.

Half a dozen willing hands seized the learned man about the waist and carried him into the king's hut.

The captain went next, and was quickly followed by the Irishman.

Steve was now the only one left, and he knew it was more than probable that he would soon follow.

He was right. O'Brien had scarcely entered the door of the hut before he was cut loose and seized.

As none of the others had struggled, he thought it would not be good policy for him to do so.

So he kept as quiet as a lamb and waited to see what was to be done with him.

When he was hurried inside the hut he found, much to his surprise, that there was no one there but the king.

The professor, O'Brien and the captain were not there, though he had seen them carried there with his own eyes.

And there seemed to be but one room in the rudely constructed building.

But Steve was not to be kept long wondering.

Suddenly the floor fell from under his feet, and he went shooting down an inclined plane with the speed of a locomotive.

CHAPTER XII.

FRIENDLY DISPOSED.

Emma Huntington attempted to utter a scream when she saw Matt Scaggs approaching Jim with the bloody knife, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

The boy's heart almost ceased to beat as he realized that the villain meant to take his life. A cold sweat broke out upon his forehead, and he gave himself up for lost.

Scaggs seemed to enjoy the look of horror that came over the face of Jim, and he moved more slowly, as though to prolong the agony.

He paused before his intended victim, and up went the gleaming knife.

Just as he was going to plunge the blade into the heart of the helpless boy a startling thing occurred.

There was a crashing sound, and then the hut was overturned like a flash.

Bound as they were, Jim and Emma lay helpless on the

ground, and, when they collected their senses a few seconds later, Matt Scaggs had disappeared.

The pigmies were running about wildly and yelling themselves hoarse.

Something remarkable had happened, but just what it was Jim could not imagine.

He rolled over and strove to look around as much as he could.

Suddenly the sky seemed to darken, and a loud, whirling sound came to his ears.

Half a minute later a shout of surprise came from his lips.

He beheld the air ship that had dropped Emma Huntington aboard the *Lance* soaring upward through the air.

But that was not all. Clinging to a grapnel that was attached to the end of a rope, that was at least fifty feet in length, was Matt Scaggs.

The villain was high enough in space to be out of reach of the arrows from the dwarfs when Jim first caught sight of him.

What in the name of wonder did it all mean, anyhow?

That was the question the puzzled boy asked himself.

While he was thinking he saw the suspended man being pulled rapidly upward, and a moment later he disappeared inside the wonderful machine.

Then the air ship clove the air like a meteor and winged its way from Jim's view.

Meanwhile the pigmies were gradually recovering from their fright, and soon they were collected about the spot where the two captives lay.

The dead dwarf was not over ten feet distant from them, and when the little fellows saw the body they uttered a howl of anger and shook their spears as though they meant to wreak a terrible vengeance on some one.

The hut had entirely collapsed when it was overturned by the grapnel from the air ship catching upon it, and the sight of the ruins did not tend to put the pigmies in any better humor.

There were but seven men and as many women in the bunch that came up to investigate the cause of their countryman's death.

Perhaps fifteen or twenty dwarfish children were gathered in the background, and when they beheld Jim and Emma lifted to their feet they fled in terror.

One of the little men made an examination of the knife wound in the dead body, and then, pointing to the two captives, said something in his own peculiar language and shook his head.

"No, it was not me who did it," said Jim. "It was the scoundrel who sailed away through the air who did it," and he threw his head in the direction the air ship had gone.

Of course he was not understood, as far as his words

went, but the pigmies evidently knew what the motion of his head signified, for they nodded approvingly.

After a rather lengthy consultation, in which the diminutive women took an active part, one of their number advanced to the anxious pair, and with the point, of his spear cut the thongs that bound them.

Much surprised, and relieved as well, the boy and girl stepped back, and then, putting out his hand, Jim advanced toward them.

One by one they took his extended hand and shook it.

At a word from our young friend, Emma also came forward and shook hands with the little human beings.

Then they were conducted to a log and by motions were invited to sit down.

Jim thought it best to do so, and in a whisper he told his fair companion to do exactly as he did, and to keep up her courage.

"I guess everything will be all right now," he added. "That flying machine did the business for us. They think it is our enemy, as well as their own, and that is probably why they have released us."

"I see they did not take your revolver from you," whispered the girl, hopefully.

"No, they just took my rifle and knife; it is not likely they know what a revolver is, as I had no chance to discharge it when we were captured."

"I wonder if these little people do not belong to the same tribe as those we first encountered."

"It is quite likely they do. They are dressed and look about the same."

"How long do you propose to stay here before making an attempt to get back to the *Lance*?" Emma asked, anxiously.

"Not long," was the reply. "We will wait a few minutes to see what the little people propose to do, and then get up and bid them good-day. They may allow us to go, and they may attempt to stop us."

"And if they do attempt to stop us?"

Jim smiled grimly.

"I will have to make use of my revolver in that case," he said.

The pigmies stood around the two strange visitors to their land, eying them curiously. The children had become less timid, and one of them was making friendly advances toward Emma.

The girl put out her hands, and the tiny creature, who was not overclean, came to her.

A minute later the child was seated on her lap playing with her long, wavy hair, chuckling and jabbering in its own language.

This little incident made a pleasing impression on the natives, and they nodded to themselves in a manner that expressed extreme satisfaction.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDERGROUND.

When Steve felt himself shooting down the incline he quite naturally gave himself up for lost.

If the dwarf king had not intended to settle the fate of the prisoners, why should he cause them to drop through the floor of the hut?"

That was the question that flashed through the mind of the young New Yorker as he felt himself gliding swiftly downward.

Down he went for fully a hundred feet, and then he suddenly brought up in a bed of dry sand.

Confused, and not a little shaken up by his impromptu slide, Steve staggered to his feet after one or two attempts.

His arms were still bound behind him, but he thought nothing of this; his life was spared, and that gave him courage.

It was several seconds before he could think what the proper thing would be for him to do, and then it occurred to him to shout for his companions.

"Professor!" he loudly called, are you and the others here anywhere?"

"We are, begob!" came a voice not far away, "an' I want yez all to understand that I have me hands free. I am O'Brien, Steve, an' I want to tell yez that I am after bein' as loively as a cricket."

Steve was overjoyed when he heard the welcome words spoken by the Irishman, and when he saw a match struck he felt like himself again.

At the same instant the sound of footsteps was heard, and the next minute O'Brien came into view.

"Where are the professor and Capt. Androvette?" asked Steve.

"They are roight here," was the reply. "Ther captain is after bein' unconscious, and ther professor is so scared that he refuses to spake. Ain't that so, professor?"

"Ye-e-s," was the trembling word that came to their ears.

In spite of their situation Steve laughed.

He could not help it. The question put to the learned man, and the answer he gave, was enough to cause his mirth.

"If you will untie my hands we will look after them," he said, a moment later.

O'Brien soon got his fingers at work, and two minutes later the boy was free.

Another match was quickly lighted, and then the professor was discovered in the act of struggling to his feet.

Androvette lay near him, and Steve turned his attention to him, while the son of Erin hastened to free the hands of his employer.

Steve began chafing the temples and wrists of the un-

conscious man, and by the time the other two got at his side he had the satisfaction of seeing that he was returning to consciousness.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the captain; "where am I, anyway?"

"That is a question that cannot be answered just at present," replied Prof. Jacklyn, who had, as was his usual wont, regained his courage again.

"We are under the ground, and in the dark. I know that much," observed Steve.

"The little fellows have buried us before we were dead, eh?" and Androvette got upon his feet, after his hands had been freed. "I've got a lump on my head as big as a hen's egg; I got it some way, and it put me to sleep when I did get it."

"Yez didn't land roight; that's what's ther matter!" exclaimed O'Brien. "Begob! I am only after bein' shook up a little bit, mesilf."

The professor was becoming bolder every moment.

"Pshaw!" said he, "we are all right. I have my revolver yet; the pigmies forgot to take it from me. I guess we will be able to go back and teach that fellow who rules this part of the country a lesson."

"By Jove! I've got my revolver, too!" cried the captain.

"And so have I," Steve hastened to add.

"Me, too," exclaimed O'Brien. "Ther little scoundrels must have thought that six-shooters ain't after bein' dangerous. I thought they took all our weapons when they collared us."

"What good will the pistols do us if we can't get out?" the captain ventured, after a pause.

"We will get out the same way we came in," said the professor. "Come on; I will lead the way up the incline."

Match in hand, he walked over the bed of sand, and started up the steep and slippery place.

He might just as well have tried to climb the side of an iceberg. He could not make a single foot of headway!

"It is steeper than I thought," he observed.

"Which proves that if we get out at all, it has got to be by some other way," added Androvette.

"If we only had some kind of a light," said Steve, after a rather lengthy pause, "we might be able to do something. A match burns out too quick; and, besides, if we keep on lighting them, our supply will soon be exhausted."

"I've a bit of tallow candle in me pocket!" cried O'Brien, suddenly. "I niver thought of it before. I've been usin' it for me chapped hands."

The bit he spoke of was about two and a half inches in length. It was a regular godsend to them at that moment, and as the New York boy lighted it a sigh of relief went up from all hands.

"Now, thin, to examine where wer are, begob!"

It was the Irishman who led the way back into the cave-like place.

In a minute or two they discovered that the incline they had come down was a sort of narrow chute, most likely of natural formation. It ended at the mouth of a wide gallery, or passage, which extended they knew not where.

"There is no use in trying to get out by climbing up the chute," spoke up Steve. "Even if we were successful in climbing the slippery place the pigmies would certainly slay us before we could get out into the hut. I think we had better follow this passage while the candle lasts and look for another outlet."

"A wise suggestion," the captain hastened to exclaim. "Let us proceed at once. We are but wasting valuable time."

"Certainly. We will go right on at once," echoed Prof. Jacklyn.

Candle in hand, O'Brien led the way into the dark underground gallery.

At a quick pace the others followed him. They were all anxious to find an outlet before the candle burned out.

For ten minutes they walked along, noticing that they were ascending a gradual ascent.

"This is encouraging," said the professor. "We will be out presently, I think."

"The candle is gittin' lower all ther toime," warned the Irishman; "we had better hurry a bit."

With quickening steps they walked along for another ten minutes, and there were no signs of any outlet yet!

"Half an hour will about wind the candle up," observed the captain. "I never saw one burn so fast as that does."

On they made their way, now climbing over boulders and then along a rocky floor for many feet.

The minutes flitted by and the candle was burning low.

At length there was but a quarter of an inch left of it. A minute later it dropped from O'Brien's hand.

Now they were in darkness! Darkness? No. Steve Whitely's keen eyes caught the faint gleam of daylight far ahead.

"Hurrah!" the boy shouted, starting forward on a run. "I see the outlet at last!"

CHAPTER XIV.

SCAGGS LEARNS TO FLY.

It will probably be in order to follow up Matt Scaggs and see what became of him after the sudden interruption that saved Jim's life.

Just as the villain was about to sink his knife into the boy's heart, the grapnel struck the hut and turned it over.

Scaggs was sent sprawling to the ground by the shock, and in some remarkable manner his coat got fast upon one of the prongs of the grapnel.

He had no idea what caused the hut to go over, and when he felt himself lifted in the air a moment later he was rendered speechless from sheer fright.

As he went whirling around through space he caught a fleeting glance of the flying machine above him.

Then it was that he realized what had happened.

A hopeful feeling shot through him at the same time, and throwing his arms around, he managed to seize hold of the grapnel with his hands.

Up, up he went, and presently he felt himself being pulled through a trapdoor.

"I am the king of the air!" exclaimed a harsh voice near him, and then Matt Scaggs was pushed into a seat.

As he slowly gathered himself together he beheld a wild-looking man standing before him, his hand on a lever that connected with a big copper cylinder.

The fellow was one of the Bach brothers Emma Huntington had told about, and it was plainly evident that he was as mad as a March hare.

"I am the king of the air!" he repeated, this time more slowly. "Man, who are you?"

"I am Matthew Scaggs, of the exploring ship, *Lance*," retorted the villain, humbly. "You saved my life, and I thank you for it."

"I saved your life? How is it that I could not save the life of my brother, then? Tell me that."

"I—I don't know," Scaggs answered, trembling.

There was such a fierce earnestness in the man's look that he wished he was a captive in the hands of the pigmies again.

"You don't know!" thundered the crazy man, and he gave such a wrench on the lever that the air ship nearly turned over.

Both he and Scaggs went rolling about for a moment, but the machine soon righted itself again.

This little incident had the effect of calming Bach, for he paid strict attention to the workings of the wonderful invention, and appeared to be utterly oblivious of Scaggs' presence.

After a while he turned to him, and in a voice that suggested a more rational degree, said:

"Come here and learn how my great invention works; I may die myself some day, and I do not want the air ship to die with me."

Scaggs at once stepped to his side.

"I am Ferdinand Bach; my brother is dead and the machine belongs to me," he went on. "Just how he died no one but myself knows or ever will."

Then, in a very sane manner, he described the entire workings of the invention.

The manner of running it was as simple as the machine was wonderful, and Scaggs caught on at once.

A lever caused the air ship to go ahead, stop or back.

Overhead was a ring which must be pulled to make the invention settle to the ground, and near it was a button which should be pushed to make it go up. The steering apparatus was worked solely by the feet. A pressure of the right foot sent the machine to the left, and vice versa.

When Scaggs got all these things through his head, Bach showed him a drawer in a little cabinet, which, he said, contained full instructions concerning the air ship.

Just why the man was making all these revelations to him, Scaggs did not know; but he was destined to find out soon enough.

Presently an awful expression came over the face of Bach. Once more he was a raving maniac!

"You are my slave!" he hissed. "You are doomed to serve me until you die! And you will never taste another morsel of food or a drop of water! You are the slave of the king of the air!"

Bach stood squarely in front of him, his eyes gleaming like coals of fire.

A desperate resolve came upon Scaggs, and, instead of being frightened, he remained perfectly cool.

Suddenly he whipped out his revolver, and, without a word, shot the maniac dead in his tracks.

"That settles him," he muttered. "Now, to see if I can run this wonderful flying concern alone. I must land it as soon as possible in some safe spot, where I can make a thorough examination of its workings. Matt Scaggs, I repeat once more that you are the luckiest man alive!"

That the villain possessed lots of nerve was apparent, for he coolly took his place at the lever and placed his feet on the steering apparatus.

A round window of glass was now before him, and he could see the surface of the earth nearly a mile below him.

"I guess I'll drop this carcass out, and then make for that mountain over there," he muttered.

Suiting the action to the words, he removed a couple of bolts, and the next minute the dead maniac went shooting downward through space.

CHAPTER XV.

THE AIR SHIP APPEARS AGAIN.

The lot of pygmies that Jim and Emma were with seemed different from the other and very friendly. Suddenly there came a rap at the door.

Jim Wakely sprang quickly to his feet and opened it. Then it was that Jim and Emma gave a simultaneous cry of joy.

Before them stood the four they had left in the valley. It was Steve Whitely who had been bold enough to apply for admission to the hut, and with the utmost composure he exclaimed:

"How do you do, friends?"

"How did you get here?" asked Jim.

"We came underground the biggest part of the way," Steve answered.

In order to explain their sudden appearance at the hut, we will go back to the time when the keen eyes of Steve Whitely observed the light of day in the passage.

He at once bounded forward, the others following as quickly as they could.

When he emerged from the passage he found himself in a gully, which was no other than the one in which the hut where their friends were located.

"Hurrah!" he shouted; "we have got the best of the pygmies, after all!"

"I knew we were bound to triumph in the end," the professor chimed in. "Now we had better try and get back to the *Lance*, or contrive to meet the men we sent Jim after."

The feelings of the four were raised a hundred per cent., and with quickened footsteps they hastened up the gully.

They had not proceeded over a hundred feet when they came in sight of the hut.

The sight of it surprised them, and thinking it to be the habitation of one of the fiendish little dwellers of the country, they drew their revolvers.

After a short consultation Steve proposed that they should walk up to the door of the hut and seek admission.

No one was stirring about, and it hardly looked as though there was anyone inside, so the young New Yorker stalked boldly up and rapped upon the door.

What followed has already been recorded.

They then decided to return to the ship.

A minute later all hands stepped out of the door.

As they did so an immense flapping of wings was heard, and the next instant the air ship that had carried away Matt Scaggs settled to the ground within twenty feet of the hut.

Scaggs left the car as quickly as he could.

"Hello!" said he. "I am glad to meet you!"

"Why, where have you been, Matt Scaggs?" gasped the professor.

"I've been flying around a bit," was the retort. "This machine belongs to me now."

"Belongs to you?" echoed Emma. "Why, where are the Bach brothers?"

"Both dead. There was only one of them left when I went aboard the air ship. He showed me all the workings of it, and then committed suicide."

Our friends looked at the rascal keenly, but there was such a truthful look in his eyes they were forced to believe him.

"I came down here on purpose to consult with you, professor," he went on. "You might be able to fix the thing up. You understand electricity, and all that."

"Quite right, quite right!" exclaimed the learned man, warmly. "Show me the interior of the machine, and I will no doubt be able to form an opinion right away."

"Certainly," said Scaggs, "come on, right away."

"You may come, Steve," observed the professor; "you are an apt pupil in electricity."

Glad of the opportunity to see the inside workings of the invention of the Bach brothers, the young New Yorker hurried to the spot with them.

Scaggs had the air ship anchored fast with a grapnel that had caught in the roots of a tree.

This was done to keep a flaw of wind from blowing it against the sides of the gully, though there was not the least possible danger of it rising in the air.

Scaggs led the way inside, and the professor and Steve followed.

It was at this very moment that a devilish thought came into the head of Scaggs.

He was satisfied that the machine would soon give out, so what was the use of bothering any further with it?

His nature was such that he could not resist an opportunity to be revenged on those whom he fancied had done him great wrongs, and he resolved to send the doomed air ship upward with the professor and Steve inside it!

He knew that when the wings once got in motion, the grapnel would be torn from its hold, and away the thing would go.

He opened the trapdoor, as though he was going to show the two all about it, and then closed the side door and fastened it.

"These are the only ways of getting in and out," he said, and then stepping upon the ground in the center of the opening in the bottom of the car, he reached up his hand and started the motive power.

The next instant the flying machine darted upward like a frightened bird, leaving the villain standing on the ground!

The grapnel tore itself loose, and away went the wonderful invention with the luckless pair inside it!

With white faces, the rest of our friends stood gazing at a black speck in the sky, which was rapidly receding from view.

It was the air ship.

"It all lies with the professor and Steve as to whether they will come back or not," said Jim, sadly. "If they are shrewd enough to learn how the machine works, they may be able to control it and turn it back here. By the way they are going, they have not been able to do any-

thing with it yet. See! they are almost out of sight in the south now!"

This was indeed the case.

They looked round for Scaggs, but the villain had vanished.

"I—I think we had better get back to the ship," said Emma, tremblingly.

"Yes," chimed in the captain. "Now is a good time to get there without being interfered with."

Waving an adieu to the pygmies, the party set out.

A wearisome journey was ahead of them, as the route they were taking was necessarily a roundabout one, in order that they might keep clear of the inimical pygmies in the village.

But hope and fear spurred them onward, and in due time they reached the top of the ridge that divided the valley from the sea.

When they got here a terrible surprise awaited them.

Where the open water had been was now a mass of unshapely rocks, and the *Lance* had disappeared from sight!

CHAPTER XVI.

UP IN THE AIR.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Prof. Jacklyn, "the scoundrel has started us off to a certain death!"

Steve made no reply. He was too astounded to utter a word. Immovable, he stood gazing at the rapidly receding earth through the open trapdoor.

A minute later he had recovered himself, and stooping to the floor, he closed and locked the door.

"That is right," nodded the professor, whose face was so pale it reminded the boy of a ghost.

"We must find a way to manage this machine," said Steve, showing that all his pluck was returning. "We are getting farther away from our friends every second."

"Yes," was the reply, in a hoarse tone; "we must do something."

Steve's sharp eyes soon lighted upon the lever and the rings hanging from above, and he determined to learn what they were there for.

Matt Scaggs had started the air ship upward so quickly that the boy had been unable to see what he did to cause it.

But he was bound to find out now.

Steve tried the lever, and the trembling motion that followed satisfied him that he was causing the machine to proceed at a greater speed.

Then he pressed the lever the opposite way.

The flapping of the huge wings attached to the balloon ceased, and the wonderful invention sailed through the air after the manner of a hawk.

"Good!" exclaimed the young New Yorker; "I have

learned how to go ahead and stop. Now, the thing is, how do we steer this artificial bird, and how can we alight upon the ground without breaking our necks?"

He sat down upon a stool that was fast to the floor of the car as he finished speaking, and as he did so his feet touched the steering apparatus.

The air ship veered around a trifle, and struck a different course.

"I have it!" cried the intelligent boy. "Professor, it has all come to me now! I can sit right here and run the machine to perfection. It is steered by the feet, and there is the window right in front, for one to see where he is going!"

"Eureka!" exclaimed the professor. "You are a born genius, Steve. Turn around and let us go back to our friends before the machinery gives out."

About twenty minutes had elapsed since Matt Scaggs sent the air ship shooting skyward, but it seemed to the two who were in it that it had been hours.

Steve now felt comparatively easy, and starting the powerful wings in motion, he made a graceful curve and started back in the direction they came from.

It was just at this moment that, for some unaccountable reason, the gas began leaving the huge silken bag.

Both Steve and the professor could hear it escaping, and it was with wildly beating hearts that they saw themselves gradually nearing the ground.

The flying machine was over a quarter of mile above the surface of the earth at the time, and almost directly beneath was the town or village of the natives.

Nearer and nearer it came to the ground, and a minute later the grapnel, which was still swinging from the car, caught upon a pile of rocks.

With the powerful wings still beating the air, the machine gradually sunk, until it finally rested upon the earth's surface.

Prof. Jacklyn and his young companion breathed a sigh of relief.

Steve opened the door in the side of the car, and they stepped out.

It was just at the outskirts of the village of the pygmies where they landed, and in a very short time a horde of the little fellows were hurrying toward them.

The sight of the wonderful flying machine amazed and frightened them.

Though the approaching natives did not appear to be very hostile, our young friend and the professor stepped back into the air ship.

A couple of rifles hung upon the wall, and Steve quickly had one of them in his hands.

"Professor!" he cried, "this wonderful invention has been turned over to us, and we must protect it with our lives!"

"Right, right!" retorted the man of learning, seizing the other rifle, and quickly stepping out he added, in as fierce a tone as he could command:

"Back, you insignificant little hounds! We did not come here to harm you, so beware!"

Steve smiled in spite of himself. Evidently the professor had forgotten the fact that the pygmies could not understand a word of English.

But, anyhow, he meant business, for he advanced boldly to meet them, his rifle ready to be discharged in an instant.

Strange to say, his manner had the effect of stopping the approaching natives. They came to a halt and proceeded to hold a discussion, gesticulating earnestly meanwhile.

Finally they turned and went back in the direction of the village.

"That's good!" exclaimed Steve. "Now we can make an examination of the air ship and find out how it works."

"You stand guard and I will make the examination," retorted the professor, stepping inside the car.

The boy nodded, and then, rifle in hand, he began walking back and forth in front of the disabled flying machine.

Prof. Jacklyn worked away diligently and soon discovered that the motive power was electricity, and the gas for the balloon was furnished by the same wonderful power.

And a closer investigation informed him that one of the main ingredients that ran the battery was about exhausted.

All this took him but ten minutes, and he emerged from the door of the car with such a broad smile of satisfaction on his face that Steve gazed at him in astonishment.

"Why, what's the matter, professor?" he gasped.

"Not much—with the air ship. One of the ingredients used in the generative power is exhausted, but I have plenty of the article aboard the *Lance*."

"But how are we going to get it from there?"

"We must go after it."

"Very well. I think the flying machine will be safe enough here. The pygmies appear to be afraid of it, and are not likely to bother with it."

Steve's idea was to get back to the *Lance*, and if Jim Wakely and the others had not already returned, to get a force of men to go with him to look for them.

Many hours had passed since they left the ship, and they were both hungry and tired.

But stern necessity spurred them on, so, with a last look at the air ship, they set out.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOOMED TO LIVE BEYOND THE ICE.

Gone! Vanished!
And what a change!

It hardly seemed possible that the water and ship could have disappeared in such a short period, but such was the case. The earthquake had created a fearful havoc in that vicinity.

Our friends stood gazing blankly before them for the space of two or three minutes.

Then Jim Wakely spoke.

"The earthquake has swallowed up the ship!" he gasped.

"And with all on board, most likely," retorted Capt. Androvette, with something like a groan.

"No, not all!"

It was the first mate of the *Lance* who spoke. He hastened to them with such a wild look in his eyes that he might have been taken for a crazy man.

But the man was perfectly sane, though the scene he had witnessed a short time before was enough to drive a weak-minded person crazy.

He rowed ashore half an hour before the terrible disturbance in the earth's bowels came, bringing with him the necessary instruments to take an observation from the sun, which hung like an immovable ball of fire in the heavens.

He ascended to a high point on the slope, and then proceeded to get ready for the experiment.

As has before been stated, no satisfactory results could be attained on shipboard, and the mate got it in his head that he might be able to strike the correct latitude and longitude if he tried it ashore.

Just as he got ready for the experiment the shock came.

The ground swayed and trembled beneath him, but he managed to retain his feet.

He turned his eyes upon the noble ship anchored in the bay, and then—

He saw both water and ship sink from sight!

Then the man fainted.

When he came to he beheld heaps of rocks piled where the water had been a few minutes before, and beyond the white haze from the ice belt in the distance, and the sky overhead, naught else was to be seen.

When the mate told what he had experienced, a feeling of extreme loneliness came over our friends.

They were left—eternally left in an unknown land beyond the ice!

It was an awful thing to think of, especially when the country was inhabited by a race of barbarous dwarfs.

Sick at heart, the four turned back toward the valley, taking the mate and the observation instruments with them.

They had not taken fifty steps when they were met by the professor and Steve.

The meeting was such a pleasing one to them, that for the time being, they forgot all about the dire disaster that had so recently happened.

Steve was allowed to relate what happened to the professor and himself after Scaggs sent them skyward in the air ship, and then Jim informed them of what they could see from the top of the ridge.

When the professor heard that the *Lance* was gone—swallowed up forever, he ran like a wild man to the top of the ridge, and then, when he saw it was true, fainted dead away.

It took some time to bring him to, and when this was accomplished he was so limp that he was scarcely able to walk.

They reached the gully in due time, without being disturbed by any of the pygmies.

An hour later they had erected a covering of brushwood against the bank of the gully, which was quite large enough for the members of the party to sleep under.

In spite of the awful catastrophe that had befallen them, our friends slept long and well.

But before they were twenty-four hours older they were destined to receive another great surprise.

* * * * *

After sending the air ship heavenward, Matt Scaggs fled into the woods. He rambled about some time and then emerged into a cavern that was apparently of unlimited extent.

Rays of light streamed in through various oddly shaped cracks in the roof, and the air in the place was pervaded by the unmistakable odor of sea water.

"Where in blazes have I walked to?" Scaggs exclaimed. "I smell salt water, but yet I am underground. I guess I can get out of here soon, though. I—Hello! what is this?"

The villain stood as if transfixed, and gazed straight ahead of him in dumfounded amazement.

And no wonder! He was gazing at the wreck of a ship!

Prompted by curiosity more than anything else, Matt Scaggs moved toward the wreck.

The hull of the vessel was nearly intact, and as the villain neared it he was struck with the idea that there was something familiar in its appearance.

The light that pervaded the vast cavern was rather dim, and Matt Scaggs was unable to see the name painted on the stern of the wreck until he was quite close to it.

And when he did get near enough to read it, he was thunderstruck.

Slowly he spelled out the letters:

"L-A-N-C-E!"

"Great Jupiter!" cried the astonished villain; "the *Lance*; Prof. Jacklyn's ship! And down here under the surface of the earth! I wonder——"

Matt Scaggs did not finish what he was going to say, for at that moment he happened to glance above him.

The sight that met his gaze was a grewsome one, to say the least. Hanging over the side of the ill-fated exploring ship, a bight of a rope about his waist, was the body of one of the crew!

The staring eyes seemed to be looking straight at Scaggs, and with a yell of fright the villain stepped back.

"Pshaw!" he muttered, a couple of minutes later; "why should I be afraid of a dead man? I see it all now. It was an earthquake that did this business; the bottom of the bay must have dropped out and let the water and the ship down here; the water has gone on downward, to be turned into steam, as soon as it reaches the eternal fire in the bowels of the earth. It is more than likely that every man on board was drowned and swept away with the exception of that fellow hanging there. By Jove! I am going aboard and investigate."

Unhesitatingly he walked around to the bow of the wreck. The ship must have struck upon her forward end, for it was smashed down even with the floor of the cavern.

Picking his way through the jagged timbers, he clambered upon the sloping deck and made his way aft.

Water was still dripping from the rigging, and Scaggs shuddered as the swinging end of a wet rope struck him in the face.

But he kept on until finally he reached the door of the main cabin.

He tried to open it, but found it was locked.

He was just about to raise his foot to kick it down when a startling thing happened.

The door opened, and the figure of a man stood before him!

CHAPTER XVIII.

SURPRISED.

The next morning—rather, twelve hours later, for the sun had remained shining ever since they had been there—our friends felt much better.

Rest and refreshment is apt to improve the body and mind of ordinary mortals, and it was the case with the Antarctic explorers.

Of course there was a feeling of sadness when they thought of the mysterious disappearance of the *Lance* and her crew; but they tried hard to look on the bright side of their situation.

The air ship was found to be as intact as when the professor and Steve left it.

The young New Yorker had been worrying over the

wonderful invention. He was afraid the little fiends might take it into their heads to set fire to it or destroy it by some other means.

Now that the *Lance* was gone, the flying machine would be the only possible means of their leaving the land beyond the ice.

But it would not carry them all.

There was something like this running through Steve's brain when he saw the curious contrivance placed in the gully near them.

The gas had entirely left the balloon, and in its present state the thing looked queer enough.

Steve and the professor turned their attention to the flying machine, leaving the others at the work of constructing a hut.

When it was time to quit work for the day, Steve and the professor had arranged the air ship so there would be little danger of it being harmed by the elements, and had made a complete examination of its mechanical parts.

"Too bad, too bad!" mused the professor, half aloud. "If the earthquake had not swallowed up the *Lance*, we could have gone on board and found the very chemical we are in need of."

"And that would have enabled us to make the necessary gas and furnish the power to move the wings?" asked Steve.

"Yes; we could have fixed it in less than an hour."

"Professor, we must find the wreck of the *Lance* and get the chemical we are in need of!"

As the young New Yorker spoke he laid his hand on the old man's shoulder and looked at him impressively.

"Must find the *Lance*!" echoed the professor. "Why, how in the name of all that is wonderful are we to do that?"

"We will go to the spot where we last saw her."

"And find a mixed pile of misshapen rocks."

"And probably more. It does not seem possible to me that the ship has gone far beneath the surface of the earth. Suppose we go, professor?"

The learned man shook his head.

"I am afraid it would be a useless journey," he said, shaking his head. "However, I have no objections to you and some one else going."

"Jim Wakely and I will go, then!"

"Go on; I am perfectly satisfied."

Steve at once hurried to the side of his chum.

Somehow the boy felt that he was certain to find some traces of the lost ship.

When he had confided his plans to Jim and found he was just as anxious to go as himself, he felt elated.

Prof. Jacklyn wrote out a description of the chemical desired, and also where it was located in the cabin of the

Lance when he saw it last; though he did this in a manner that showed that he had no hopes of getting it.

Armed with a revolver apiece, the two boys set out a few minutes later.

They proceeded straight through the gully for about a mile, and then took to the dense woods.

Occasionally they caught a glimpse of the sun through openings in the foliage, and by this they were guided.

They were lucky enough not to meet any of the pygmies, and in due time reached the top of the ridge.

The scene was the same as when they last looked upon it, but, nothing daunted, they hurried down the slope.

What had been the bottom of the bay was now elevated at least fifty feet, and it appeared strange and unnatural to the boys.

"Let me see," observed Jim, coming to a halt a few minutes later; "according to my recollection the ship was anchored right over there."

He pointed to a pile of bluish-looking rocks, and Steve nodded his head, exclaiming:

"That's right."

Picking out a rugged pathway for themselves, our two young friends slowly made their way to the spot indicated.

It was not a great distance, but it took them nearly ten minutes to get there.

There was no sign of any water, though there was an unmistakably salty odor in the air.

With their eyes open for a discovery, the boys searched about the spot.

At length a cry of joy escaped the lips of Steve.

"Eureka!" he cried. "Look here, Jim!"

His index finger pointed to the jagged end of a broken spar.

Like antelopes the boys bounded to the spot.

They saw a crack about six feet in width, and hesitated about going any farther for fear that the ground might give way beneath them.

Before they could make up their minds what to do the head and shoulders of a man appeared through the crack.

It was Matt Scaggs.

The very instant they saw who the man was, Steve and Jim drew their revolvers.

Scaggs seemed to be even more astonished than they were. A look of fear came over his face, and in a faltering voice he exclaimed:

"Don't shoot me, boys! I don't mean you any harm."

"Come out!" said the New Yorker, sternly, and then tell us what is down there."

"There is nothing down there," retorted the villain, as he dragged himself out of the opening and staggered to his feet.

The moment he assumed an upright position, the boys comprehended the fact that he was intoxicated.

"Nothing down there, eh?" questioned Jim; "where did you get the rum you've been drinking? Didn't have it with you, did you?"

Before Scaggs could answer, another head appeared through the crack and a voice rang out:

"Help me out, Matt! I'm so deuced drunk I can't lift my feet off the crosstrees!"

The boys quickly recognized the face as belonging to one of the firemen of the ship.

Steve at once stepped forward, and seizing the fellow by the arms, dragged him out.

"So it is you, Johnson?" he observed, coolly. "Now, then, I want you to give an account of yourself and tell us what happened to the ship."

"Ship's down below; all hands drowned but me," was the answer. "I ran in ther cabin; ther rest all rushed out on deck; I got saved, and they went to Davy Jones, or some other worse place. That's right, ain't it, Matt?"

Scaggs said nothing, and the ugly scowl on his features showed that he did not intend to say much unless he was forced to.

"Oh, you needn't ask him," Jim hastened to reply. "Mr. Scaggs is not the sort to speak the truth, anyhow. I think we will make him a prisoner before he attempts to do us some bodily harm. Hold up your hands!"

As the boy's revolver was directed at his heart, Scaggs hastened to obey.

"Tie him up, Steve."

Steve happened to have some strong marline in his coat pocket, and he soon had the villain fixed so he was entirely harmless.

"Now, Johnson, you two appear to be rather friendly; so, to make sure of it, we will have to treat you in the same way."

"Why, what have I done?" questioned the fireman, in a tone that was half-maudlin.

"It isn't for what you have done, but for what you might do," observed Steve. "It is no use; you have got to be bound hand and foot, the same as Matt Scaggs."

Johnson pleaded, but it was in vain. A few minutes later both he and Scaggs were lying on the rocky ground, securely bound, and minus their weapons.

"When we come back we may release you," said Jim. "We are going down aboard the *Lance* by the way you came up."

"You have a right to go there as much as anybody," replied the fireman. "Let me loose, and I'll show you how to get down on deck."

"Thank you. I guess we can make out without your assistance." And going to the opening, Steve leaned over and peered downward.

A few feet from his face was the maintruck of the vessel, and below he could see her outlines quite plainly.

"It is easy enough to see how they got up here," he remarked to his companion as he lowered himself.

"Yes," answered Jim. "Go on; I'll follow."

A minute later the two boys had disappeared through the crack, and were descending the rigging to the deck of the lost ship.

"The poor old *Lance* is doomed to stay here till she rots, or is moved by another earthquake," observed Jim, as he stepped upon the slanting deck.

"You are right," retorted Steve. "She will never sail the sea again; but I am very glad we have found her. Our only salvation is the air ship now; if we can't get away in that we will have to stay here in this outlandish place as long as we live."

"But will the air ship carry us all?"

The New York boy shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps we can arrange it so it will," he answered, evasively.

"I have my doubts about that."

"Well, we won't argue the question now."

"That is so. We have more important business just at present."

"We want to get what we started out to find."

"And we can take back some other things, too."

"Certainly; all we can carry."

Straight for the cabin they made their way.

The door was open, just as Matt Scaggs and Johnson had left it.

The reason Scaggs found the fireman alive on the ship is easily explained.

As Johnson stated, he had been the only one to rush below decks when the earthquake came.

He closed the door after him, and the next moment the bottom of the bay opened and the vessel went downward.

So quickly did it take place that very little water got into the cabin.

The shock when the ship brought up on a solid bottom was so severe that the fireman was rendered unconscious.

When he came to and found that the vessel was in a sort of cavern, the fellow was so badly frightened that he looked for some spirits to steady his nerves.

He drank great quantities of the stuff, and soon became intoxicated.

Then he locked the cabin door and sought a berth, to sleep off the effects of the liquor."

He was aroused by the arrival of Matt Scaggs, who promptly joined him in the debauch, and they kept it up for hours.

At last they concluded to go aloft and see if they could find some way of communicating with the outside world.

What happened next the reader knows.

"This is awful!" exclaimed Steve, as he looked at their silent surroundings before entering the cabin.

"Yes; what do you suppose became of the rest of the crew?"

"Drowned, as Johnson said, beyond a doubt."

"Let's get away from here as soon as possible, so we can tell the rest about our wonderful discovery."

Without further ado they entered the cabin.

Steve had no difficulty in finding the chemical the professor desired, and then, gathering a few small articles, and a rifle apiece, they went out on deck.

Up the shrouds they went, proceeding rather slowly, on account of the articles they were loaded down with.

Jim was the first to emerge from the crack, and naturally he looked at the spot where they had a short time before left Scaggs and Johnson lying.

They untied their bonds.

"You can go on about your business now, and leave us to attend to ours," observed Johnson.

The boys thought it best to do so, and they promptly started for the ridge.

But they did not neglect to keep an eye on the men they were leaving, as there was no telling what they might do.

At length they reached the other side of the ridge, and were out of sight of the pair.

"Now, I guess it will only be a question of a short time before we will have the air ship in running order!" exclaimed Steve.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SOUTH POLE.

"I have got what I went after!"

There was a ring of triumph in Steve Whitely's voice as he made this exclamation.

Tired, and glad to get back again, the boys stood before the professor and the rest of their companions.

"What do you mean?" cried Emma Huntington; "have you found the *Lance*?"

"We have!" our two young friends answered in a breath.

Prof. Jacklyn nearly fainted from pure joy.

"The *Lance*—my ship! is she afloat?" he managed to gasp.

"Far from it," retorted Jim. "But still, nearly everything but the crew is yet aboard."

"Tell me all about it," said Capt. Androvette, eagerly. Steve proceeded to do so, and he was listened to with interest most profound.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" exclaimed the mate.

The two boys were pretty well tired out, and a short time after they sought their couches.

A good, healthy sleep of eight hours did them a power

of good, and when they arose and had breakfasted they felt as good as ever.

Prof. Jacklyn was waiting for Steve, so they might begin work on the air ship, and the young New Yorker was just as anxious to get at it as was the professor.

While their companions were busy finishing the hut they had commenced to construct, the professor and Steve went at work at the mechanism of the wonderful invention.

In less than two hours they had it in as good order as it had been before the chemical ran out.

Just as they had set the battery going, in order to inflate the huge silken bag, the professor was seized with a sudden attack of vertigo.

He was too ill, by far, to make the trip through the clouds, as he had intended, but urged Steve and Jim to take the air ship out and try it.

And it is needless to say the boys were glad to do it.

Steve was thoroughly acquainted with the workings of the machine, and he anticipated no difficulty in making it go where he pleased.

About an hour later they were ready to start, and stepping inside the car they closed the door and waved their caps to their friends through the little window in the forward part.

Then Steve took his place at the levers, and a moment later they arose in the air.

Up, up they went, until finally the surface of the earth lay half a mile below!

"We will go in the direction I deem to be due south," observed Steve, as he glanced at the compass, which, like those aboard the *Lance*, had been acting strangely ever since they had been in the land of the pygmy fiends.

"You can't tell much about that," said Jim. "It has pointed in at least a dozen different directions during the last minute, and the needle keeps on acting wildly."

"Do you know what I think makes that?"

"No."

"We are pretty near the pole."

"I have no doubt but we are."

"Well, that is why the compass won't work."

"Perhaps it is."

"I am sure of it," said Steve, in a positive manner.

He brought the air ship around to the direction he thought to be the proper one, and then sent it forward at swift speed.

Jim, who was not quite at his ease yet, gazed at the rapidly flitting surface of the earth with distended eyes.

"Steve, this is wonderful!" he gasped, after a minute or two of silence.

"Rather," was his companion's reply, who was more used to flying through the air.

"How long do you intend to stay up here in the clouds?"

"Why, are you beginning to get squeamish?"

"I'll admit that I feel safer on the solid earth than I do here."

"Well, we will land at the first spot that looks attractive enough and shows no signs of being a dangerous place."

"At what rate of speed do you think we are going?" questioned Jim.

"At least thirty miles an hour," Steve retorted. "Come to think of it, I guess we will keep right on our course for an hour, and then make a landing somewhere."

"All right, you are running the thing."

Steve took out his watch, and then settled down to his course.

At the end of half an hour the compass ceased to cut up its queer antics, though the needle still appeared to be very restless.

Jim stood at the lookout window with a powerful glass leveled at the surface of the earth ahead of them.

Fifteen minutes later he gave a cry of surprise, and then exclaimed:

"Steve, if I am not looking at the point called the South Pole by geographers, I never hope to see it!"

He was gazing at a circular valley of about five miles in diameter, which ran down to a point in the center to the depth of at least a mile.

There was nothing in the line of vegetation, or any living thing in it, and the surface of the conical-shaped valley seemed to be composed of a gray rocky substance.

Steve changed places with him, and promptly agreed that it was surely the pole that they saw.

"We will get directly over it and go down and take a look at it," he said.

A few minutes later he stopped the propelling power, and the air ship came to a dead stop, exactly over the center of the barren valley!

Then it was that the needle in the compass began whirling around with amazing rapidity.

"Hurrah!" cried the young New Yorker, and the country boy joined in a hearty cheer.

They had opened the trapdoor in the bottom of the car, and were gazing beneath them without the aid of a glass.

"That is about the queerest-looking place it has ever been my lot to behold!" said Jim.

"That is so; I agree with you," replied Steve. "I—Great Scott! We are descending!"

Sure enough! The air ship was settling swiftly downward, and Steve had not caused it to do so.

Faster and faster they approached the bottom of the huge hollow, and though Steve tried to make the machine rise, it would not do it.

"There is some sort of attraction drawing us downward!" Steve gasped, his face turning pale.

"And in three minutes more we'll be dashed to death!" Jim added, in a hoarse whisper.

CHAPTER XX.

DIAMONDS AT THE POLE.

Down—down—down!

The air ship seemed to be drawn by an irresistible force toward the bottom of the conical valley.

Frightened as he was, Steve made sure that everything was in working order.

But the wonderful invention could not be checked from going downward!

Already it was below the level of the surrounding country, and it seemed a certainty that it would strike the bottom of the huge natural funnel with terrific force.

But no! When within fifty feet of the bottom, which all along had appeared to be a great deal nearer than it was, a strange thing happened.

The flying machine came to a dead stop!

A simultaneous sigh of relief left the lips of the boys. They felt that they were saved, after all.

But what had stopped their descent?—that was the question.

"Steve!"

"Jim!"

Our young friends seized each other by the hand.

"What will we do now, Steve?"

"We will turn on all the power to go up."

"Do it at once, then; I feel anything but safe here."

The young New Yorker started the upward propelling power once more.

But the air ship did not move, or even tremble!

If it had been glued to a solid rock it could not have remained more stationary.

Again the boys looked at each other in blank dismay.

"Jim, this is certainly the South Pole. We are held here by some curious attraction that is unknown to us," said Steve, weighing his words carefully as he spoke.

"I believe you," was the reply.

"That being the case, the bottom of this funnel-shaped valley must be one end of the axis upon which the earth revolves."

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, we must get down there and see how it looks."

Steve had lost all fear now, and his face was illumined with the thought of the wonderful discovery they had made.

"Get down there? How are we going to?" questioned his friend.

"Don't be alarmed, now. I'll show you directly."

It was wonderful to see how coolly Steve went to work to accomplish his purpose.

Like a flash it came upon him that, since the air ship would not move either up or down, it might move horizontally.

Almost instantly he started the powerful wings in motion.

There was a violent threshing in the air, and then the air ship began to forge slowly ahead.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jim, leaning out of the window and waving his cap.

Steve, whose face was wreathed in smiles, held his course, and soon the grapnel Jim threw out caught in a pile of rocks on the side of the sloping little valley.

"Haul on the line!" Steve called out. "There, now we have her!"

The car was soon pulled close to the rocks, and then, without the least hesitation, the young New Yorker stepped out.

Jim followed him a little bit gingerly; but when he had once gained a foothold on the solid earth, he felt perfectly at ease.

Making sure that the air ship was securely anchored, they started to make their way to the central point of the valley.

It was not so steep but that they could proceed with safety, and in a very short time they were at the desired point.

Here a surprise awaited them.

The bottom of the natural funnel terminated in a hole.

The boys had not noticed this from the air ship, and they were quite curious over it.

Stepping as close to the edge of the hole as they dared, they peered downward.

As they did this a feeling of extreme dizziness came over them. It seemed as though they were being whirled around like a top.

"Jim, we are going around!" gasped Steve, as he drew back in alarm.

"We appear to be," was the reply.

"How do you account for it?"

"I don't know."

"I think I do."

"Well, what makes us appear to be going around when we look into the depths of the hole?"

"Because this opening is nothing more than the axis of the south side of the globe! We go around, while the air that is in it and about us stands still. That is what caused the air ship to cut up so badly, beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"Steve, you are always right in the opinions you form, so I take it that you are not wrong this time."

"I am going to prove that I am right."

"I suppose you are able to do that."

"Of course I am able. All that I will have to do is to bring Prof. Nicodemus Jacklyn here; he will be able to account for the phenomena, if anyone living can."

"We had better go back and get the professor right away, then," said Jim. "That is, if we can get away from here with the air ship."

"We will get away easy enough," was the reply.

"How?"

"We will tow the machine to the level country above, and then get in and sail away."

"Steve, your head is worth two of mine!" exclaimed the country boy. "You have a way of solving difficult problems that is altogether too much for me."

Steve smiled.

"I guess I am not quite as smart as all that," he said.

"Well, shall we go up?"

"Wait until we have looked around a bit. Ah! what is this?"

The young New Yorker picked some small object, bright and shining, from the ground.

"Jim, that is a diamond!" he quickly added. "I know it is, for I have seen too many of them in the windows of the big jewelry stores in New York to be fooled."

"If you say it is a diamond, it is," replied Jim, with a gasp of astonishment.

Then he turned his eyes upon the ground in search of a stone to mate the one his chum had found.

And he was not long in discovering one, either.

A close investigation showed that the shining stones, which were certainly diamonds of the purest water, were scattered about plentifully.

Then it was that the boys forgot all about their friends, the air ship or the South Pole, for the time being, and for over an hour they searched about, picking up the largest of the precious gems.

At length each had a pocketful!

"Steve, what time is it?"

Jim had been called to his senses by the thought of how queenly Emma Huntington would look wearing a necklace made of the diamonds.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Steve, as he looked at his watch; "we have been away from headquarters over three hours!"

"And it will take us an hour to get back, won't it?"

"Yes, all of that."

"We had better start, then?"

"Yes, right away."

"We can come back again and fetch the professor with us."

"Certainly; we will do that, by all means."

With a longing look at the miniature diamond field, the boys began climbing to the spot where the air ship was anchored.

It took them several minutes to get aboard, as the side of the valley was pretty steep.

"I wonder if we could rise from here?" said Steve; "we are not over the hole."

"Let us try," answered Jim.

The anchor was hauled in, and the young New Yorker set the powerful-winged machine in motion.

To their great joy, it slowly sailed upward.

Ten minutes later they were skimming through the air in the direction of the gully, where they had left their companions.

The electrical apparatus went like clockwork, and the wonderful invention sailed along like a monster hawk at an altitude of over a mile.

Ten minutes later the air ship made a graceful curve and settled in the gully.

To their dismay they discovered Prof. Jacklyn lying unconscious on the ground!

Bending over him, they found that he had been hit on the head with a club or some other blunt instrument.

He was not badly hurt, but stunned.

While the boys were in the act of bringing him to, they were startled by the sound of a shot.

Jim rushed around the corner of the hut, and was just in time to see the air ship rising swiftly upward.

The grapnel was dangling within a few feet of the earth, and with the speed of the wind he sprang toward it.

Just then a rifle cracked from the car, and a bullet whizzed past his ear.

Then the grapnel was drawn upward, and the air ship sailed away!

CHAPTER XXI.

A SHOT IN MID AIR.

Matt Scaggs and Johnson waited until the boys had disappeared from the vicinity of the wreck. Then Scaggs led the way through the woods and made for the gully.

It occurred to him that by going there he might have a chance of getting square with his enemies.

The fireman had no idea where he was going, but trusted entirely to his companion.

Just as they reached the edge of the woods that skirted the gully, Scaggs happened to look skyward.

As he did so he gave a violent start and clutched the fireman by the arm.

"Look up there!" he exclaimed, hoarsely; "there is the air ship I was telling you about. Johnson, that belongs to me, and we must get possession of it."

"All right," was the reply. "Let us sneak down and

wait for a chance to steal it. By the way the thing is acting, it is going to come down presently."

Scaggs nodded, and then the pair proceeded to crawl down through the shrubbery.

When they got into the gully they beheld Prof. Jacklyn seated on the grass, while, standing a few feet from him, was Emma Huntington.

"I've got it," whispered Scaggs, excitedly; "we will knock the old man on the head and steal the girl. What do you say?"

"Stealing the girl and the flying machine is all right, but we mustn't hurt the professor, or anyone else, for that matter," replied Johnson.

"How are we going to get the girl without putting the old fool out of the way?" demanded the more blood-thirsty villain of the two.

The fireman shrugged his shoulders.

"Leave it to me; I'll show you how," he answered.

Scaggs said no more, but followed him cautiously through the bushes.

"You get the girl," instructed Johnson.

The next minute the stealthy pair darted forward.

Matt Scaggs seized Emma and Johnson tapped the professor on the head with the butt of his revolver.

Then they darted back into a convenient hiding place in the bushes, and together bound and gagged their captive.

In less than five minutes after the air ship descended and the two boys stepped out.

The moment Steve and Jim started for the hut, Scaggs nudged his companion.

"Now is our time," he whispered.

Swiftly but noiselessly they darted for the car.

A few seconds later Scaggs and the helpless girl were inside.

"Yank that grapnel loose and jump in—quick!" he cried to the fireman.

His command was obeyed, and then up they went!

"We are in luck!" exclaimed Johnson.

Just then his companion fired a shot from the window.

"What did you do that for?" demanded the fireman.

"I shot at one of those meddlesome boys."

"Don't you do it again, but attend strictly to your business and run this confounded flying machine! Do you hear?"

He drew the grapnel up with a vicious jerk as he spoke.

"Yes," was the meek rejoinder.

"See that you do."

Matt Scaggs allowed the air ship to soar upward in an oblique direction until they were fully a mile from the surface of the earth.

"What are you going so high for?" asked Johnson, as he looked out of the window in a startled manner.

"Are you afraid?" retorted Scaggs, in a sneering tone.

"If there is a coward here, you know who it is."

"Yes, and I will show you who it is before long."

Matt Scaggs drew his revolver as he spoke.

His action was so unexpected that the fireman turned deathly pale.

"What do you mean, Matt?" he gasped.

"I mean that I am going to shoot you and throw you out of the car! Then I will fly away to the north with my fair young bride. Johnson, you got the best of me when we fought the duel, and you made me beg, but you can't do it now!"

"Be reasonable, Matt. You are not going crazy, are you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the villain. "I told you we would see who the coward was presently."

The fireman stood near the little lookout window with his hands at his sides; Scaggs stood less than five feet from him, one hand on a lever of the controlling power of the air ship, and the other grasping a revolver that was leveled directly at the heart of the man before him.

And Emma Huntington, in a state of terror, lay huddled in a corner of the car, hearing and seeing all that was taking place.

Her eyes were fixed upon the two men before her in a fascinated stare.

Suddenly the air ship gave a violent lurch; Scaggs lost his balance; the arm of the fireman flew upward; a quick report followed, and the girl fainted!

CHAPTER XXII.

EMMA'S COURAGE.

"Matt Scaggs was dead!"

Johnson had been quick enough to send a bullet through his heart when the car lurched and gave him time to draw his revolver.

"I was compelled to do it or be shot myself," the fireman muttered, as he bent over the unconscious girl and untied her bonds. "But who is going to run this infernal flying contrivance now?"

His face turned deathly white as he asked himself this question, and he staggered to his feet as though he were suffering from an attack of sickness.

Presently his eyes rested upon the dead man lying before him, and something like a muffled shriek of horror left his lips.

The features of Scaggs appeared to be grinning at him mockingly, as much as to say:

"Now you have killed me, what are you going to do next?"

"I must get that out of my sight!" cried Johnson, in a frenzy. "Ah! here is a trapdoor! I'll drop it through that."

It was just at this moment that Emma recovered from her swoon.

She possessed more courage and nerve than the average girl, and it took her but a moment to realize her position.

When she found that she was no longer bound, a sigh of relief escaped her lips.

Then her eyes roved around her narrow quarters, and finally rested upon the living man and the dead one.

The smoke caused by the discharged revolver still floated about the car, and it seemed as though she was looking through a veil at the horrible scene right before her.

The fireman was endeavoring to open the trapdoor to cast the body from the car.

Without uttering a word the girl watched him at his work.

Presently the door yielded, and the next moment it opened.

A draught of air blew into the car and caused the smoke to go eddying about into all sorts of queer shapes.

Then came a shriek that the girl never forgot to her dying day.

The body of Matt Scaggs went shooting toward the earth far below, and with it went Johnson!

Just how it happened, she could not tell, but the man must have lost his balance in trying to rid himself of the grewsome object.

For the space of five minutes the girl lay there, her face as pale as death.

Then, realizing that she must do something, and that quickly, she arose to her feet.

With trembling hands she closed the trapdoor.

During her stay in the air ship Emma had become pretty well acquainted with how the wonderful invention was worked.

She had never touched the levers herself, but had watched the Bach brothers do it time and again.

A gleam of hope came over her, and nerving herself, she stepped over the life blood of Matt Scaggs and took her place at the levers.

Alone in the air, nearly a mile above the surface of the earth!

Picture to yourself the feelings of the girl, reader!

But her feelings of hope gradually grew to one of confidence when she found that the huge mechanical bird answered her touch.

A flush came upon the fair girl's face, and with brightening eyes she sailed back in the direction of her friends.

The flapping of the giant wings made sweet music to her ears, and she pressed on more power.

A few minutes later she located the gully, and then the air ship began circling slowly downward.

So exact did Emma manage it that she landed within a few feet of where it had been when she was seized and carried aboard it.

And to her great joy she saw all her friends standing there to receive her.

Not being able to control herself any longer, the fair creature sprang out and landed—

Plump into Jim Wakely's open arms!

It was fully five minutes before she was able to tell what had happened, and when she finally did so it was with a trembling voice.

When the enthusiasm of our friends had somewhat subsided, Steve spoke of the diamonds he and Jim had found at the Pole, and drew a handful of the sparkling gems from his pocket to verify his words.

The sight of them sent the rest into raptures.

"We must pay a visit to the Pole before we leave," said the professor.

"Sure!" echoed the rest.

"But we had better wait till the excitement among the pygmies dies out," ventured Steve.

"To ther Avil One with ther little fellows!" cried O'Brien. "I want ter git some of ther diamonds."

But the persuasive arguments of the professor and Androvette carried the day, and it was decided that they should wait a day or two longer.

Meanwhile Steve and the professor began conjuring their brains as to how they were going to rig the air ship so it would take them all safely away from the place.

There were seven of them, and it was quite evident that the wonderful invention could not possibly carry more than four, or five at the most!

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

"Professor," said Steve, a couple of hours later, when they had just arisen from an appetizing repast, "have you thought seriously of how we are all going to get away from this country?"

"There is only one way it can be done," was the reply, "and that is to construct another balloon, attach it to the air ship, and enlarge the car so it will hold us all."

"Hadn't we better get to work at it, then? You know the long spell of darkness will begin in a few days, and I think we ought to get away before that."

All hands, save the professor and Emma, paid a visit to the strangely wrecked *Lance* and found the silk and material necessary to construct the additional bag and enlarge the car, and when it was delivered in the gully work was at once begun.

So industriously did they keep at it that in four days it was pronounced complete.

Now the question was: Would it work?

The professor had strengthened the storage battery and connected a pipe to the additional balloon, and all there was left to do was to try it.

Steve concluded to make the test.

A boulder weighing more than the combined weights of our friends was attached beneath the car by means of a strong cable, and he started to rise with it.

To his great joy the huge machine soared upward like a bird!

After sailing around for half an hour, he came down.

"It is all right!" he cried. "Now we will all pay a visit to the Pole, and then start direct for home from there!"

This proposition suited all of them, so the necessary supplies were stored in the car.

When everything was ready, all hands entered the car of the air ship, and then Steve sent the flying wonder upward.

High into the heavens it soared, making a huge circle over the land of the pygmies.

Everything progressed as smoothly as clockwork, and in due time they reached the wonderful spot the boys had discovered.

They were careful to land above the valley on this occasion, and made the journey to the bottom of the conical valley on foot.

Several more diamonds were found, and after the professor had announced over and over again they had certainly found the South Pole, they made their way back to the air ship.

But the boys did not forget to plant the Stars and Stripes there before they left, and then, taking off their hats, they gave a resounding cheer.

"Due north!" said Jim, as his friend took his place a few minutes later.

"It seems as though we can hardly go in any other direction, if we wanted to," Steve returned with a smile.

Up went the air ship, and then there was a violent flapping of wings—they were off!

Homeward bound!

"Is it a hoax? A wonderful flying machine said to have become entangled in the rigging of a steamer bound for China. Six men and a young lady found in a car attached to it. Claim they have been to the South Pole. A remarkable tale that cannot be verified at the present writing."

This was the heading that startled the readers of a San Francisco daily paper some few weeks after our friends started on their journey homeward.

The majority of those who perused the article voted it a fraud, and said it was some more foolish newspaper sensationalism.

But there were a few who waited for the report to be corroborated, and they kept on waiting till the steamer *Perambuc* arrived in port from China.

A fresh batch of news came concerning the air ship, giving the names of those who found it; but even this was not proof enough for the incredulous.

Two weeks later, when another steamer arrived, reporting that the vessel that encountered the wonderful air ship had burned to the water's edge while entering port, almost everybody put the whole yarn down as a hoax.

But the same steamer that brought the last piece of news had among its passengers seven people who are well known to the reader.

They were Prof. Nicodemus Jacklyn, Steve Whitely, Jim Wakely, O'Brien, Capt. Androvette, Emma Huntington and the mate of the lost *Lance*!

Almost every word the first article in the paper stated was the truth; but—well, who would believe it? Some of their most intimate friends might and that was all.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 68, will contain "The Young Acrobat; or, The Great North American Circus," by Horatio Alger, Jr. This is an intensely interesting story of a boy, who, driven to the wall by a rascally guardian, joined a circus, and met with all sorts of absorbing adventures. When we say that it is written in the best vein of Mr. Alger, that prince of story tellers, the boys know what a treat is in store for them.

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